



A Digital and Flexible City Government: Hybrid Work Action Plan

"Remote-IT" Integrated Action Plan of City of Tartu

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Date: 2025

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1 Introduction and Context

Remote-IT

Remote-IT is an URBACT Action Planning Network, financed through the URBACT IV (2021-2027) program of the European Commission. Remote-IT network tackles the new challenges cities are experiencing connected to the future of work. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the transformation around how work is organized, with hybrid and remote work models significantly impacting the lives of citizens, as well as the organizational culture of major employers (public/private). Remote-IT partnership of cities is collaboratively exploring this emerging topic to implement proactive policy making.

The network addresses the following themes:

- ↳ Remote work preparedness for public sector employees
- ↳ Attraction of digital nomads and skilled high-value high-education professionals
- ↳ Transition to sustainable tourism practices
- ↳ Support the development of culture and creative industries
- ↳ Enhancing quality of life of residents

Across these themes, the network addresses the governance theme as creation of regulations, recommendations, guidelines necessary for the organization of remote work, self-assessment, finding driving reasons and promoting work-life balance. The network's activities are based on scientific research and data.

City of Tartu

Tartu is the second-largest city in Estonia and is often considered the country's intellectual and cultural capital. Located in southeastern Estonia, it is best known for the University of Tartu. The city has a vibrant student population, a lively café culture, and a rich history that blends medieval heritage with modern innovation. Tartu is also recognized as a hub for science, education, and technology, while its charming old town, museums, and festivals make it a popular destination for visitors.

Here are some key indicators related to Tartu and the Remote-IT project:

- ↳ Population in Tartu 97 379 (2025),
- ↳ 380 employees work in Tartu City Government,
- ↳ 100% of state services are digitized,
- ↳ Paper free e-governance since 2003,
- ↳ 10 092 companies, employment rate 72,2% (2024),
- ↳ 253 932 accommodation visitors, including 97 711 foreigners (2023),
- ↳ 37 accommodation hosts with 2395 beds (2023),
- ↳ 2406 customer contacts in Tartu Welcome Centre (2023),

- ↳ Estonian Digital Nomad Visa from 2020,
- ↳ Estonian e-residency program from 2014.

Tartu has well-functioning cooperation relationships with many local governments in Europe, Asia and America, including an extensive network of twin and partner cities. Tartu is a member of international associations, the most important of which are the Association of Baltic Cities, the Association of Sustainable Local Governments (ICLEI), the Association of Nordic Twin Cities, the European Social Welfare Cooperation Network, the Association of Hanseatic Cities, and others.

Current situation

Estonia has been a pioneer in developing various e-government solutions. The digital systems in use have made it possible to adapt to the advent of remote/hybrid work faster and more conveniently. Since the location of working is no more important, many people in Estonia are able to work remotely. Internet access has become a human right for Estonians, and a good internet connection covers most of Estonia, including forests and swamps.

Tartu has played a leading role in this digital transformation. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly accelerated the trend of remote and hybrid work. Many Estonians prefer to work not only from the office, but also from home office from somewhere in a warmer and sunnier climate during the winter months. At the same time, the atmosphere of a university town, high research potential, and the green and pleasant living environment that Tartu offers attract remote workers from other countries.

Although working remotely can be varied, inspiring and sometimes more productive compared working from office it contains also different risks. Various data protection and cybersecurity threats should not be forgotten. It is important to thoroughly consider the security of various devices and information systems used for work, and how to raise people's awareness in the areas of cyber hygiene and data protection, which may come under great pressure when working outside office spaces. The effective functioning of hybrid teams and the change in management style also need to be considered.

Tartu City Government is the executive body of the City of Tartu, Estonia. It employs around 380 people, not including teachers, medical staff, or other professionals working in city-funded institutions like schools or kindergartens. The number refers to the staff directly working in the City Government itself. The City Government is organized into departments, each responsible for specific areas of city administration. As of now, there are 15 main departments. These departments work under the direction of the Mayor and Deputy Mayors, implementing the policies approved by the Tartu City Council.

The Tartu City Government began extensive remote work practices and arrangements when the COVID-19 pandemic first broke out. Almost overnight, all employees were directed to work from home. Our IT administration department did an outstanding job helping colleagues get connected from their homes. A lot of personal assistance was provided. Since the transition happened so abruptly, no formal remote work framework was in place at the time. People simply did their best to make things work. Now that some time has passed, it is clear that this framework needs to be properly created and developed. City of Tartu could be an example for other cities/ public organisations how to settle up this framework, what are the necessary steps and things to think through.

According to the survey conducted throughout the employees of the City Government in 2024, currently about 31% of respondents work remotely on a regular basis, 59% do so occasionally, 6% would like to work remotely but are currently unable to for various

reasons (e.g. the nature of their work does not allow it), and 4% of respondents do not wish to work remotely at all. Of the respondents who work remotely, 65% are doing so more than they did before the COVID-19 pandemic, indicating that the crisis brought a significant change to the work practices of the Tartu City Government.

As an internationally renowned university city, Tartu has all the conditions to acquire diverse and high-quality skills and knowledge and apply them in business or in global research networks. As a result, Tartu has great potential to attract highly educated specialists and digital nomads to the region. In the same region, there are not enough jobs for highly educated specialists. Remote work/hybrid work could be one solution for how highly educated specialists could stay in Tartu while finding challenging employment for themselves.

At the beginning of the project, Tartu defined two main challenges:

1. developing and rethinking the processes of remote work/hybrid work in Tartu City Government in such a way that work would be safe regardless of location and the effectiveness and quality of work would not suffer.
2. positioning the city of Tartu as a destination for remote work, in order to provide better information and services to people who want to stay or come to Tartu to work remotely.

Strategies and policies

There is a very strong political and technological support for the implementation of the project activities at the local government level. At the same time, the management model of the Tartu City Government is probably less hierarchical compared to other partners, which allows the project team to operate more operatively. Tartu City Government has extensive experience in participating in various cooperation projects, including participating as a partner in several URBACT networks.

The main documents guiding the development of the city of Tartu are:

↳ **Development Plan of the City of Tartu 2025-2035**

Under the cross-cutting themes of the development plan, the priorities are described as accessibility, innovation and knowledge-basedness, which the project activities will contribute to.

The public services of the city of Tartu must be available, accessible and of high quality. This applies in both physical and digital space, regardless of a person's place of residence, age, special needs or other characteristics. By designing accessible services, we can also be more flexible in the longer term of the organization of work within the city government, because a physical location is no longer important for work and offering services for citizens.

The city of Tartu is an innovative development center where innovative and future-oriented solutions are developed. Tartu is a bold pilot and user of smart solutions. Teleworking in local government is still a practice that is not very common on a European scale. Within the framework of the project, we can learn best practices through various international meetings and sharing experiences and put together an action plan to be implemented in our organization as a forward-looking work culture.

↳ **Tartu City Climate and Energy Plan "Tartu Energy 2030"**

The development of a good living environment is important for the city of Tartu, and one of the directions in this regard is initiating and participating in various environmentally sustainable initiatives. For example, Tartu has achieved the Platinum Label of a Green Destination. The City of Tartu has prepared a climate and energy plan, the ambition of which is for Tartu to be a climate-neutral city by

2050. Tartu is also a Mission city for the European Union's mission of "100 Climate Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030".

Tartu is the center of attraction in Southern Estonia and is mainly known as a university town. The city's values are care, wisdom and innovation, and it strives to implement this at the level of organisational management as well as the services offered. Therefore, it is especially important to keep up with the trends of the labour market and, among other things, to enable the 380 employees of the Tartu City Government flexible ways of working, which has become the norm today, on an equal and transparent basis, so that the quality of work does not suffer.

Problem identification

Within the Remote-IT project, the City of Tartu wished to analyze and prepare an action plan for two main directions:

- ↳ improved preparedness of public sector employees to work remotely (knowledge development, technological aspects and organizational readiness for teleworking),
- ↳ raising awareness of Tartu as a destination for remote work in order to attract digital nomads and a highly qualified workforce.

To deal with these two layers in Tartu, two local groups (ULG – URBACT local group) had been formed, which were engaged in analysing the above-mentioned challenges and finding solutions for these challenges.

The first ULG group tackled the challenge of improving remote work preparedness of public sector employees. This ULG included mainly employees of different departments of the Tartu City Government (different levels of management and the necessary sector-specific units like information security, data protection, human resource management, technology etc. were represented). In addition, state institutions operating in Tartu were included to learn from their remote work practices and experiences. Cooperation was also carried out with Smart Work Association (NGO), who helps to develop general skills and knowledge about smart and flexible work in Estonia. They have developed the Learning Module for Enhancing Virtual Teamwork Competencies and as hybrid work includes virtual teamwork, Tartu City Government also needs to develop these competencies. There were 8 permanent members of this ULG and the ULG meetings were held regularly at least 1 time per quarter (between transnational meetings).

The second ULG group tackled the challenge of raising awareness of Tartu as a destination for remote work. This ULG included employees of Tartu County Tourism Foundation, Tartu Welcome Centre, Public Relations Department and Business Development Department of the Tartu City Government. In total, the ULG group included 7 permanent members and the selection of people based on the principle that the members of ULG would have the necessary field-specific knowledge, but also the ability to enforce plans and decisions from their professional position. In the first ULG meeting, the mapping of potential stakeholders was made (Figure 1), but since it was concluded that there is no clear goal in this area, it is not reasonable to include all of them immediately.

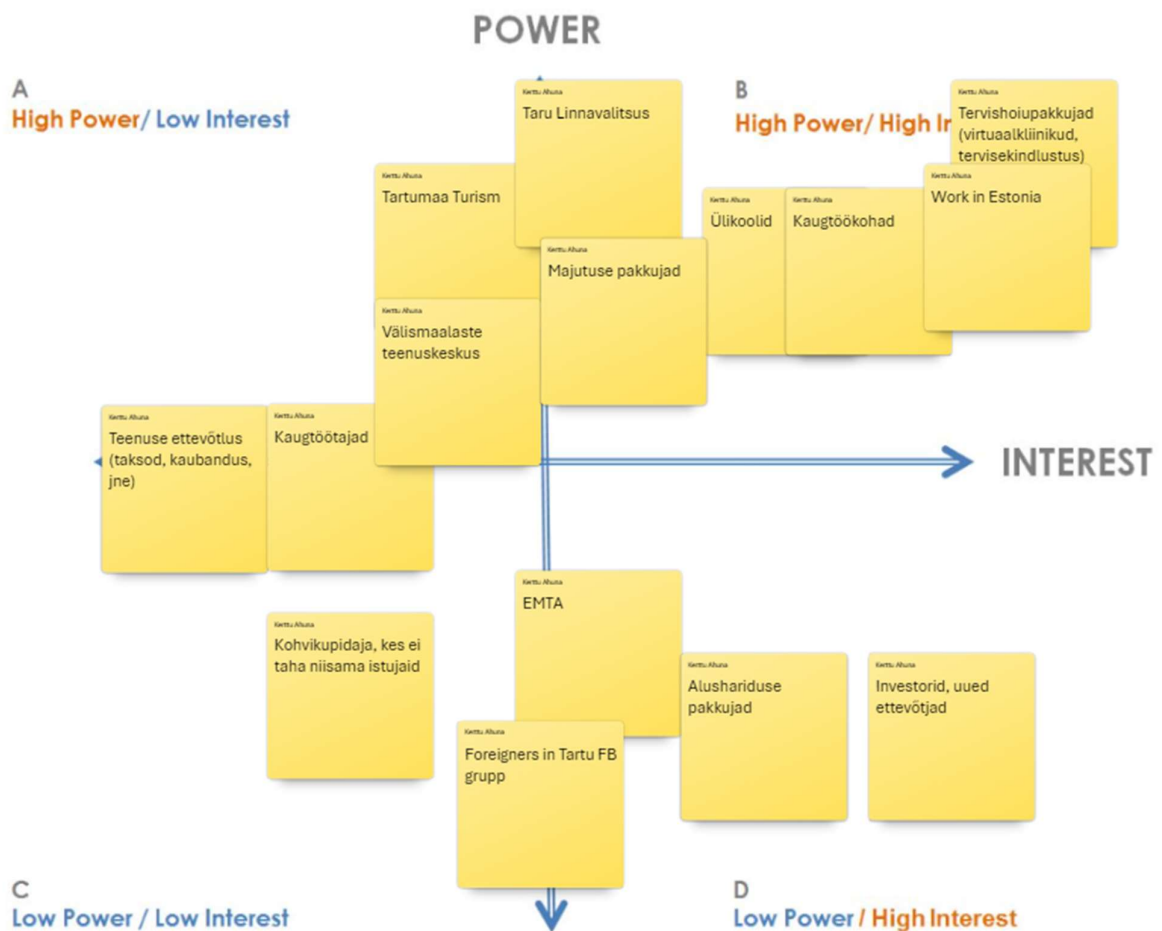


Figure 1 Stakeholders mapping for the challenge no 2

Furthermore, several ULG meetings were held on the second challenge and one of them concluded that there is no data on digital nomads and remote workers in Tartu. There was decided that the necessary data must be gathered before the actions can be developed. However, as it became clear one of the last ULG meeting, that remote workers/digital nomads as a target group had not been set as a high priority among ULG members in the next few years, it was decided to lower the ambition a little regarding this priority. It was also concluded that this challenge is big enough and needs separate focus and resources to fully solve and this cannot be done in high quality during this project. But to take advantage of the Remote-IT opportunities and transnational learnings, the best practices of the project partners were still gathered.

From this, the decision was made to move forward only with the challenge no 1 – goal of improving the preparedness of public sector employees to work remotely.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced people globally to work from home and brought with it a major shift in work culture towards hybrid and remote work. As this was a crisis situation, action was taken quickly and there was no time to thoroughly think through the organizational aspects of work and the management processes of teams working remotely or hybrid. As the shift from “working mostly from office” to “working mostly hybrid/remotely” affected most of the employees, it shows that work will be done regardless of location. The freedom to choose working environment provide motivation, efficiency, saving time and resources (cost of transportation, parking, car etc) and ability to balance better work and family life. But as every coin has two sides there are also challenges related to hybrid/remote working, especially related to working culture, social

aspects, team spirit, management, etc.

To find out the problems in our organisation and the causes, the Problem Tree method was used with the ULG members (Figure 2).

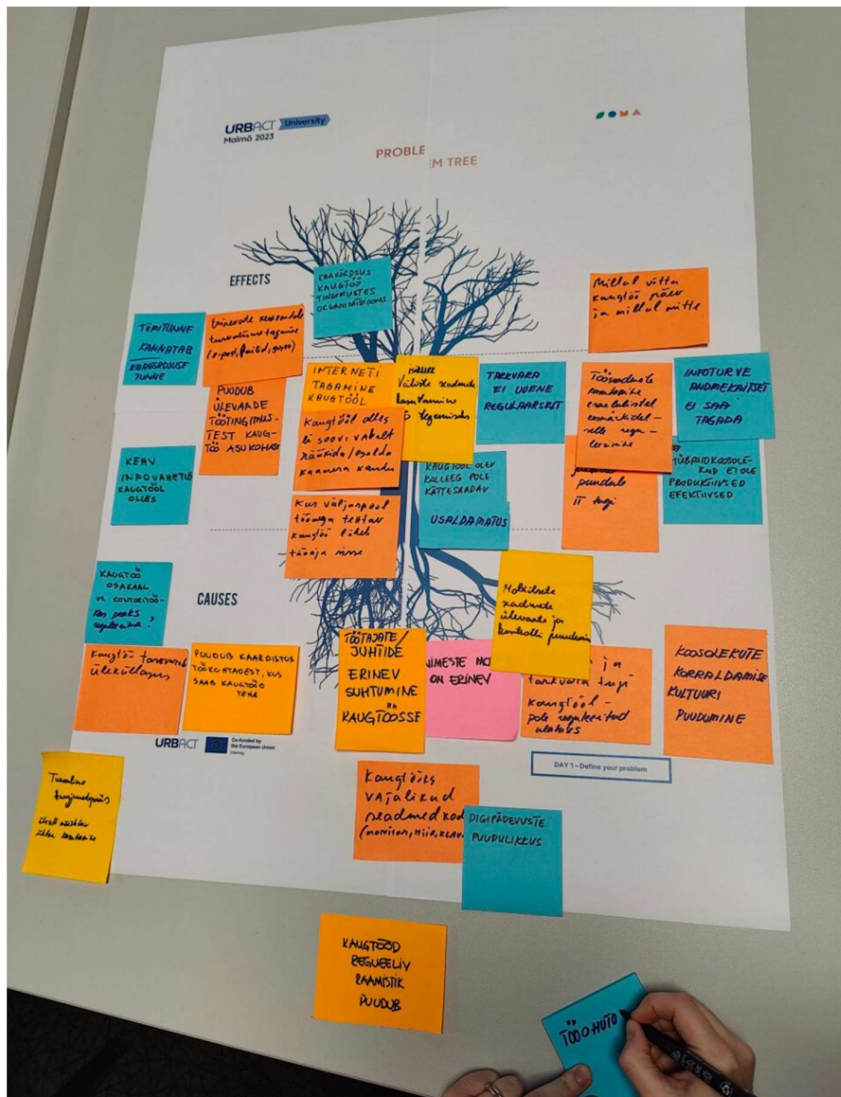


Figure 2 Problem Tree for finding problems related to the challenge

To validate the problems, a survey of remote work was carried out among the employees and managers of Tartu City Government (responses from 223/380 employees) in the end of 2024. Based on the survey, the main development needs (Table 1) within the organization and the personas (Figure 3) on the basis of which these development needs could be solved were outlined.

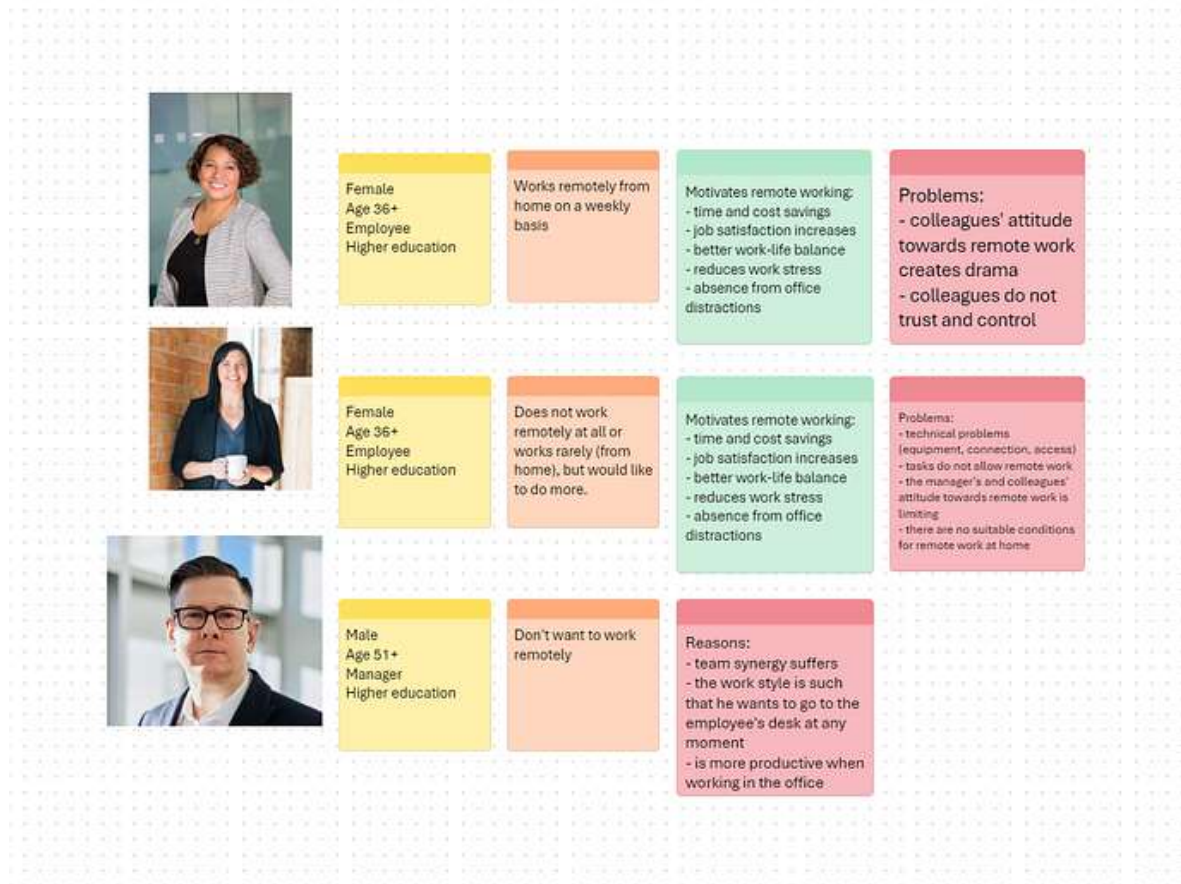


Figure 3 Personas of remote workers

Employees' readiness to work remotely	
Strengths	Development needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mobile tools necessary for remote work are available Knowledge of cyber hygiene and data protection is rather good Remote work in an organization is widespread The opportunity to work remotely increases the competitiveness of the organization in the labor market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no unambiguous and clear guidelines that would harmonize the principles of remote work in the organization as a whole Enabling remote work in different departments varies People's attitude towards remote work needs to be improved When it comes to managing hybrid teams, managers need help

Table 1 Strengths and development needs

The results of the survey proved that the readiness of employees to work remotely from a technological point of view is rather well established in the Tartu City Government, but the harmonization of the organization of work across the organization needs to be solved. In addition, different training courses regarding remote work for employees and managers should be provided.

Engagement of local stakeholders

The logic of the formation of the ULG was based on the principles that the ULG would be as broad-based as possible in terms of its executive power, knowledge and ability to involve. There was political support for the project, and the knowledge of the leaders and specialists in a specific field was represented (Figure 4). In addition, external partners (state institutions, private companies, NGO) were included for broader view, knowledge and practices. It is important to note that ULG included people who were involved in this field daily, and this would ensure sustainability after the Remote-IT project.

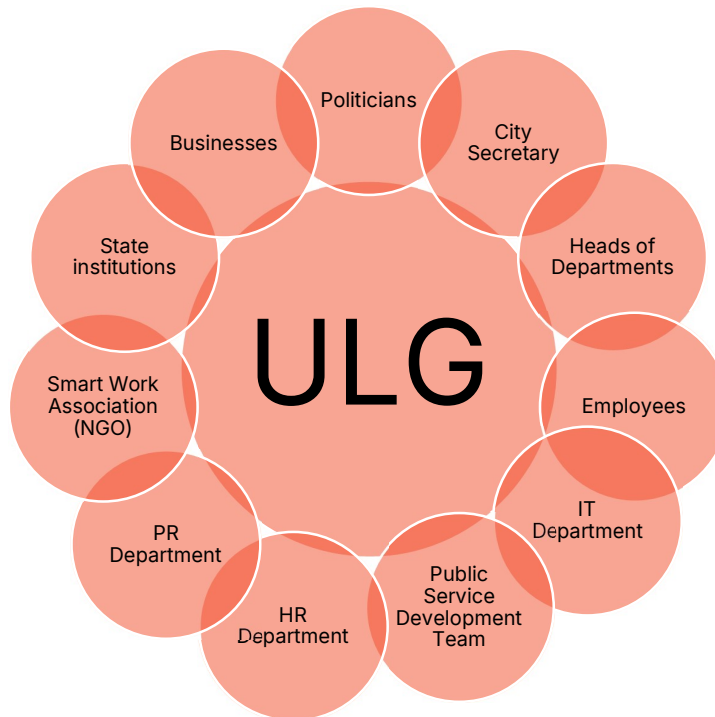


Figure 4 Stakeholders in ULG

There were permanent ULG members and additional ULG members who were involved as needed:

- ↳ Head of Digital Development and Information Security/Project Coordinator
- ↳ Employee Experience Manager/ULG Coordinator
- ↳ Chief Analyst/Project Assistant
- ↳ Deputy Mayor – responsible for innovation, tourism, entrepreneurship etc
- ↳ City Secretary – responsible for public services, HR, IT, information security, data protection etc
- ↳ Head of Public Relations – public and internal communication
- ↳ Specialists and Head of IT Department
- ↳ Specialists and Head of HR Department
- ↳ Chief Data Officer
- ↳ Data Protection Officer
- ↳ Employees and managers of city government – practice hybrid work, involved in problem mapping
- ↳ Smart Work Association (NGO) – develops knowledge and skills about smart and hybrid work in Estonia
- ↳ Agricultural Registers and Information Board – state institution who practice hybrid work 100%

↳ Statistics Estonia – state institution who practice hybrid work 100%

Among problem identification and prioritizing, the ULG was involved in several other discussions, decisions and activities regarding the action plan. For example, the ULG created the personas based on the results of the questionnaire, developed the specific objectives, actions and indicators to achieve the desired change, brainstormed the testing action ideas and participated in testing action, and drafted the action table.



Figure 5. ULG meeting: brainstorming testing actions

In addition, two ULG meetings were held with state institutions to learn from their experiences regarding hybrid and remote work. From these meetings the ULG got confirmation that already planned actions are important and necessary to implement. For example, both institutions had created their own remote work guidelines, they offered management and technical support, etc.

However, both institutions differ from the city government, as they have implemented smart work principles and goal-based working, what makes the functioning of organization transparent and there are no questions, misconceptions or distrust that work is not being done remotely. In city government, a few teams practice this already, but after this ULG meeting, discussions about the need to implement it in the organization fully, were started. Since transitioning to goal-based work is a major challenge and requires a separate action plan, this action plan does not address this activity.

In addition, both institutions assess regularly employees' job satisfaction, mental health, workload, etc., and one of them uses specific software called Moticheck for that. As our action plan also includes this kind of regular assessment as an activity, we saw that we could also test it and see if it suits our needs (read more about this in the Testing Action chapter).

Main integration challenges & cross-cutting themes

The URBACT method is based on an action-oriented, integrated and participatory approach. An integrated approach involves planning and implementing activities in a way that brings together different aspects and parties, including cooperation between different sectors (public sector, private sector, NGOs, communities, research institutions, etc.) and sectors at the same level of government, between different levels of government, between geographical areas, etc.

The following challenges were encountered during the preparation of the action plan:

- ↳ Teleworking contributes to sustainable urban development and life, and teleworkers also consider it to be one of the important reasons for teleworking (teleworking saves time, costs, less pollution, etc.). Teleworking must therefore be further promoted and addressed in its entirety and comprehensively.
- ↳ When planning activities, the time dimension must be considered, i.e. the activities are short-term and long-term. The challenge is to learn to think and plan more from a broader and long-term perspective.
- ↳ The stakeholders have been actively involved in the planning of the activities, but they also play an important role in the implementation of the activities. The challenge is to clearly formulate these roles and expectations and share responsibility so that the planned activities can be carried out.
- ↳ Local stakeholders include the most important representatives from different fields and sectors, but attention should also be paid to a territorially integrated approach and how to involve neighboring municipalities in the planning and/or implementation of activities. In addition, the composition of the stakeholder group should be reviewed over time, and it should be considered whether there is anyone else who needs to be involved, for example, in the case of a specific topic.

The integrated approach of URBACT envisages that the action plan also covers cross-cutting themes, such as gender equality, green transition and digital transformation.

Gender equality

Remote and hybrid work affects gender equality in many ways.

- ↳ Teleworking often allows for more flexible work schedules, which helps people to better balance work and private life, and this is particularly beneficial for women, who traditionally take on most of the home and care responsibilities. Flexible work schedules allow women to return to the labor market faster and easier after having a child.
- ↳ Teleworking can open job opportunities in different geographical areas where local job opportunities are limited, regardless of gender.
- ↳ Remote work focuses on productivity and results rather than physical presence, which can reduce employer and colleagues' prejudice against women or men.
- ↳ Remote work helps create more diverse teams, allowing companies and institutions to recruit from a wider talent base, including women and minorities who may be underrepresented in certain regions or industries.

Green transition

Teleworking helps reduce environmental impacts and promotes sustainability in several ways:

- ↳ When working remotely, commuting decreases. When people work remotely, the number of daily commutes to and from work decreases, which in turn reduces the traffic load and the number of pollutants associated with it. This also results in lower fuel consumption, which helps to reduce fossil fuel consumption and air pollution. The noise level in the main movement corridors is reduced.
- ↳ Energy consumption in offices is reduced. When people work from home, companies can optimize office space, which reduces the energy consumption of heating, cooling, and lighting buildings. Home offices often use less energy because there are fewer appliances and lighting running throughout the home. However, remote work can also increase energy consumption at home, especially if the home is not energy efficient.
- ↳ Remote work and flexible working hours increase productivity, which reduces the need for unnecessary use of energy and resources.
- ↳ Remote work relies on digital solutions that reduce the use of paper and facilitate electronic communication, which in turn reduces the amount of waste. However, due to increased digital work, the energy consumption of IT equipment and data centers may also increase, which must also be taken into account when reducing environmental impacts.

Digital transformation

Remote work and digital transformation are closely linked. COVID-19 showed that the shift to remote work accelerated the adoption of digital processes and technologies, as it was essential for the functioning of companies' work, and digital transformation, in turn, enabled the widespread adoption of remote work, providing the tools and infrastructure necessary for effective remote work.

In the context of remote and hybrid work, the following aspects of digital transformation can be highlighted:

- ↳ Infrastructure and technology deployment. Remote work is made possible by mobile devices (laptop, tablet, mobile phone) and a fast, stable and secure internet connection (4G, 5G, Wifi, VPN). In addition, various software solutions enable remote work (office programs, communication software, work management software, procedural systems, etc.).
- ↳ Cybersecurity and data protection. Remote work increases the need to ensure cyber security and data protection, as people work outside the usual working environment that has already been implemented with physical security measures. To ensure cybersecurity and data protection when working remotely, remote workers must be trained accordingly and appropriate technological measures must be implemented (authentication measures, rights and access management, screen filters, VPN connection, etc.).
- ↳ Digital cooperation, management culture and the tools that promote it. Remote and hybrid work affects the culture and management culture of the organization. Managing hybrid teams requires a variety of leadership skills and practices, such as setting clear goals, ensuring effective communication, and monitoring performance. This can be ensured by the development of relevant processes and the skillful use of digital tools (e.g. various collaboration platforms Trello, Jira, etc., and communication tools Teams, Slack, etc.).
- ↳ Data and digital documentation. Effective remote work requires access to the data, information, and documentation necessary for work in digital form. For digital nomads, it is also important in an unfamiliar living environment that the information

and data they need are available digitally and conveniently (e.g. information about various services, events, obligations, etc.).

- ↳ Digitization and automation of processes and services. Remote work requires that processes and services are digitalized, and technological solutions are used to perform work. This means that the employee does not always have to be available in the office, but can do their work remotely, using mobile devices and information systems and other software solutions (e.g. procedural systems, document management system, etc.). To make (remote) work more efficient, routine activities are automated and machine learning opportunities are used.
- ↳ Digital competences and the digital divide. To ensure the quality and results of teleworking, it is necessary that the employee has sufficient skills and knowledge to use the technological solutions necessary for teleworking (e.g. videoconferencing platforms, collaboration tools and cloud technology). Digital transformation makes it possible to share such knowledge not only through physical training, but also through online training and onboarding programs. In addition, the digital divide is fueled by the lack of equal access to technology (secure and mobile devices, stable, secure, and fast internet connections).


Testing Actions

During the project, we managed to carry out three testing actions.

Testing Action no 1: Online training and Sharepoint

One of the intervention areas of the action plan is the development of knowledge related to remote and hybrid work, which also includes the implementation of a training environment and the creation of training materials for both managers and employees.

As testing action no 1, online training on the topic "Conducting and participating in hybrid and virtual meetings" was created with the help of the NGO Smart Work Association. The training material was adapted to the Microsoft Sharepoint platform, which also hosts the city government's intranet and is used for sharing knowledge among employees.



Conduct and participate in virtual and hybrid meetings

The e-learning consists of several modules that focus on the effective planning and management of hybrid work and meetings. Participants can watch videos, read materials, take tests and participate in discussions.

Module 1: The ABCs of Hybrid Meetings

- Setting goals for meetings and efficient use of time.
- Participant roles and methods of involvement.
- Best practices for conducting hybrid meetings.

Module 2: Castellani's Dual Participation Model

- Individual vs. structural participation.
- Creating balanced and inclusive participation.
- Practical examples and application possibilities.

Module 3: Effective Communication Strategies

- Effective communication in hybrid teams.
- Interactive tools and engagement techniques.
- CAT theory and adaptation of communication styles.

Module 4: Microsoft Teams capabilities and technology solutions

- The best features of Teams for hybrid meetings.

How to use e-learning?

1. Start on the main page
 - Familiarize yourself with the structure of the training and choose the module you want to complete.
 - Each module has a video, learning materials and tests.
2. Learn at your own pace
 - Videos and text materials are available at any time.
 - The modules can be completed sequentially or in any order.
3. Use interactive tools
 - Test your knowledge in Microsoft Forms.
4. Put what you have learned into practice
 - Use the guides and best practices in your work.
 - Create a personal action plan to better organize hybrid work.

Figure 6. Online training implemented in Sharepoint

One of the goals of the testing action was to test the suitability of the Sharepoint platform as a training environment, as the city government does not currently have another suitable environment for it. The second goal was to test the format and content of the training material, and for this purpose, employees were asked to complete the training and give feedback on the training material. In addition, employees were asked for input on the need for further training materials on remote work and their preferred training format.

The testing action was intended for the employees and managers of three departments (IT Department, City Office incl. HR Department, Public Relations Department) who support hybrid work and conduct and participate in many online meetings and whose representatives are also part of ULG. The call to participate in this testing action was sent to all the employees of these departments and 12 employees decided to participate.

The results of the testing action contributed to the IAP as follows:

- ↳ We could use Sharepoint with Forms as a training platform, but there are some needs that these tools cannot resolve (e.g. customized feedback in self-control questions, progress bar, or some other engaging elements to show progress in modules).
- ↳ We received input on the format and content of future training, what to avoid, and what to do differently. For example, there should be more practical tasks and interactivity and less scientific and theoretical content in the next training courses. In addition, for better accessibility, videos should have textual alternatives, like subtitles.
- ↳ We can prioritize topics for future training based on employee feedback. The preferred topics are the following:
 - Hybrid work technologies and tools
 - Supporting work-related stress and mental well-being in hybrid work
 - Communication and collaboration skills in hybrid team
 - Time and self-management in remote and hybrid work

- Workplace ergonomics in remote and hybrid work
- ↳ We can continue implementing the online training platform as the preferred training format based on employee feedback is independent e-learning (e-courses, review of recorded training etc.). In addition, we could offer employees micro training and real-time online learning (e.g. training via Teams).

In conclusion, with this testing action we received confirmation that different training courses on remote and hybrid work are needed and the implementation of the training platform and training planned in the Integrated Action Plan is appropriate.

Testing Action no 2: Online training and Coursey

As we learned from the testing action no 1, that Sharepoint is not the most suitable platform for e-training, we decided to continue with the testing action no 2 and test another e-platform for online learning called Coursey. The platform has become widely used in Estonia among both private and public institutions. We met with the City Government of Tallinn to hear about their experience with using Coursey. Their feedback was great and that made us even more willing to want to try out this platform. We will start using it in October 2025 and we pilot it until the end of 2025. The conclusions of the testing actions will be made during the first months of 2026.

Testing Action no 3: Regular assessment with Moticheck

Another intervention area in our action plan is the regular assessment of readiness for hybrid work. This includes assessing various aspects like employee satisfaction, workload, mental health, trust, etc. As we learned from one of the ULG meetings with public institutions, specific IT software is used for this. Until today, city government has also assessed employees' work satisfaction, but not so regularly as we could and using different methods than Moticheck does. Moticheck differs from traditional employee satisfaction surveys by offering a continuous, real-time approach to measuring employee well-being. Instead of annual, time-consuming surveys, Moticheck uses short, weekly pulse questions focused on mood, motivation, energy, and focus. This allows organizations to identify issues early and respond quickly, rather than reacting to outdated feedback. Therefore, as testing action no 3, we decided to test this software and different method to find out if it suits our needs.

One of the goals of this testing action was to see how these weekly pulse questions work for our organization and how willingly the employees answered the questions they were asked every day. Another goal was to test how this software works for the managers and what kind of results and value it gives them.

The testing action was intended for approx. 100 employees and managers of 4 departments (City Office, Public Relations Department, Department of Communal Services, Department of Urban Design) and lasted 3 months (from May to August).

The results of the testing action contributed to the IAP as follows:

- ↳ Employees were ready to give their feedback for different aspects of work, but this should have been done in a way that the questions are not annoying or confusing and that employees understand how their feedback will be used. To use the Moticheck solution efficiently for regular assessment, the clear communication to employees and reviewing the given questions and the schedule should be done.
- ↳ Managers saw the value in this regular assessment tool and different methodology, but also noted that their employees still are waiting for clear communication of what will happen next. Therefore it is essential to include into the assessment actions in our IAP the clear communication and follow-up activities.

- ↳ As we tested the solution from the information security and data protection perspective too, the piloting showed us that the technical solution right now unfortunately does not meet our requirements.

In conclusion, with this testing action we received confirmation that employees are ready to give actively feedback, if they know what will follow. Unfortunately, this technical solution is not the right solution for us, but we can move on to find the one.

Peer Learning

Tartu team participated in a series of transnational meetings and site visits across partner cities. These exchanges provided valuable insights into diverse strategies for fostering remote work and attracting digital nomads.

The lessons learned have influenced the development of Tartu's Integrated Action Plan. Other partners experience organizing remote work in their cities and organizations provide valuable input and raise different questions. For example, how regulated the remote working process should be and how much should employees report their working hours/ working results? These are valuable questions we can consider when we start defining our hybrid work guidelines.



Figure 7. Site visit in Bucharest

During different transnational meetings several IAP peer reviews took place. The feedback from other cities, external experts and lead expert about our IAP was valuable. Bystanders gaze help to find the right balance between details and generalization, also helped to keep focus and to keep IAP realistic (SMART objectives). Some topics which are self-evident for us are not that clear for others and as the IAP should be also as a tool for other municipalities/ public authorities/ organizations to develop their strategy for remote/hybrid working, it must be clear to the wider audience.

During the transnational meetings different workshops and site visits took place but as they were mostly focused on fostering digital nomads in the city or region, most of these did not contribute directly to this IAP. The most aligned with the scope of this IAP, and therefore the most valuable to this IAP, was the Living Library session in Bucharest about the hybrid and remote work in public administration. This session introduced us the "Right to disconnect" regulation, Bucharest D6 practices for remote working, and Council of Europe Toolkit.

2 From vision to actions

Overall logic and integrated approach

Remote-IT helps cities prepare for the jobs of the future. The Covid-19 pandemic brought major changes to the organisation of work, which have a significant impact on the work culture of our people and organisations.

Remote-IT addresses the following challenges:

- ↳ Increasing the preparedness of the public sector for teleworking
- ↳ Attracting digital nomads and highly educated workforce
- ↳ Sustainable tourism development
- ↳ Development of culture and creative industries
- ↳ Improving the quality of life of local people

Estonia has been a pioneer in developing various e-government solutions. The digital systems in use have made it possible to adapt to the advent of remote/hybrid work faster and more conveniently. The COVID-19 pandemic forced people globally to work from home and brought with it a major shift in work culture towards hybrid and remote work. As this was a crisis, actions were taken quickly and there was no time to thoroughly think through the organisational aspects of work and the management processes of teams working remotely or hybrid.

Therefore, within the Remote-IT network, Tartu is focusing on improving the preparedness of public sector employees to work remotely. City of Tartu identified the main bottlenecks in example of our organization and developed an action plan to address these challenges.

To tackle the challenges, an ULG with broad knowledge was formed and they met regularly. When forming the ULG, it was considered that the group would have political support, the capacity to implement the management level, as well as the best sectoral and private knowledge from specialists and external partners.

The goal of the City of Tartu in the Remote-IT network was to prepare an action plan that would help to fulfil the city's vision that by the end of 2028, Tartu City Government will have accessible and secure hybrid work environment, supported by clear hybrid work policies and skilled staff. The vision supports the employee's satisfaction as well as organization competitiveness in labour market – it means better working environment attracts better specialists and therefore public services will be developed smarter and more efficiently.

As we prepare for the jobs of the future, it is equally important to ensure flexibility in how and where our employees work. The ability to adapt to sudden shifts in work culture is essential — not only for the well-being of our employees and the functioning of the City Government, but also for maintaining high-quality public services.

To deliver excellent services to our citizens, we must invest in a skilled and motivated workforce. Remote work is a strong incentive for attracting top talent. We firmly believe that when municipal employees feel valued and supported, they are better equipped to serve the people of Tartu with quality and care.

Current IAP can be read as a good practice that other municipalities or other public sector authorities can adapt and implement for themselves. Of course, all organizations are different, but at least it gives some bullet points what to think through and some examples how City of Tartu created the action plan.

Action plan in general

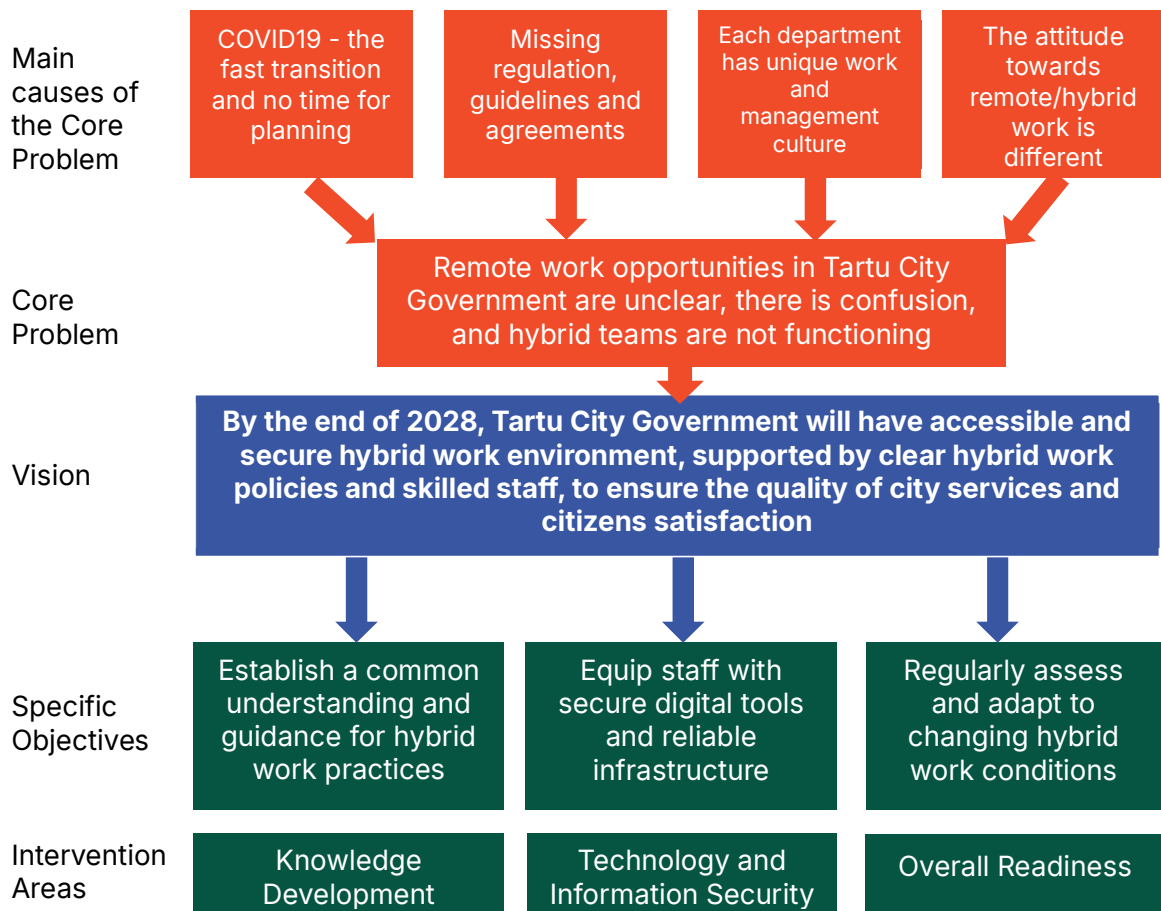


Figure 8. Action plan in general

As shown in Figure 8, putting together this action plan started with identifying the core problem and its causes. Then it was time to think and dream about what the future could be like. As the core problem was stated that „Remote work opportunities in Tartu City Government are unclear, there is confusion, and hybrid teams are not functioning“, the vision had to state the opposite:

„By the end of 2028, Tartu City Government will have accessible and secure hybrid work environment, supported by clear hybrid work policies and skilled staff, to ensure the quality of city services and citizens satisfaction“.

To achieve this vision, the following strategic objectives had been set:

- ↳ The principles of hybrid working of the Tartu City Government have been described by the end 2027 and are unambiguous to employees.
- ↳ All employees of the Tartu City Government are provided with hybrid work suitable devices and technology.
- ↳ A sustainable and adaptive hybrid work culture through ongoing assessment and responsive updates is developed.

To achieve these strategic goals, the intervention needs had been divided into three major areas which all help to achieve its own specific objective:

1. Knowledge development

Specific objective: to establish a common understanding and guidance for hybrid work practices.

The entire topic of remote work and hybrid work is currently an individual decision of each head of department in the Tartu City Government, and there are no principles that apply across the organisation that would offer transparency and equal treatment in the area. Developing the skills and knowledge necessary for hybrid work is each person's own task, but there are no environment and guidelines for it within the organization.

The survey revealed the need of different training courses related to the remote work and hybrid team management. And the testing action provided valuable insights what to keep in mind do develop these e-courses for employees and managers.

Results:

- ↳ Development of Tartu City Government's hybrid work guidelines and introduction to employees by mid 2027.
- ↳ Implementation of the training environment and development of 5 trainings by the end of 2026. 70% of employees have completed at least 3 trainings.
- ↳ Developing a programme for telework ambassadors by 2028.

2. Technology and information security

Specific objective: to equip staff with secure digital tools and reliable infrastructure.

For employees to be able to work remotely at all, it is important that every employee has mobile tools - laptop, mobile phone. In addition, the institution must have a secure connection and clear technical policies to follow when working remotely.

Organising various trainings on information security, cyber hygiene and data protection in an organisation increases people's awareness of various threats, and it is important to monitor and handle incidents correctly to avoid similar situations in the future or minimise the damage that may arise from them.

Results:

- ↳ 100% of the tools are mobile and use secure connections.
- ↳ The number of security incident notifications is increasing, as the number of incidents is decreasing.
- ↳ Remote/hybrid work security policy is created and introduced to all employees.

3. Overall readiness for remote/hybrid work

Specific objective: to regularly assess and adapt to changing hybrid work conditions.

In addition, to develop the knowledge and technological level of the employees of the institution, the work organisation also needs to be thought through. Assessment of the suitability of positions for remote work, analysis of the risk factors associated with working remotely (ergonomics, lighting, mental health, work-time balance, etc.) need to be done.

Gathering regular feedback from employees should be continued to assess the effectiveness of the measures taken and the dynamic change over time of the bottlenecks and joys that emerged in the previous assessment. Testing action provided here also valuable insights how technology and well-thought-out processes can help with this challenge.

Results:

- ↳ 100% of the positions have been assessed for the suitability of remote work by the end of 2026 and a process has been created for continuous evaluation.
- ↳ Once a year, an assessment of the situation of remote work is carried out among the employees of the Tartu City Government.
- ↳ Risk analysis has been conducted and measures to mitigate risks are described.

All of these intervention areas contain activities that need to be implemented to achieve the goals. Detailed action plan for all the actions (with main risks, stakeholders, activities, etc.) is described in the next chapter.

3 Action plan in details

Intervention Area 1: Knowledge Development

Action 1: Develop and introduce hybrid work guidelines

Action 2: Implement training platform and develop training materials

Action 3: Develop a Telework Ambassadors Program

Action 4: Learn and share hybrid work experiences

Intervention Area 2: Technology and Information Security

Action 5: Ensure digital devices and tools

Action 6: Develop hybrid work security policies

Action 7: Monitor and manage security incidents

Action 8: Improve technical security measures

Intervention Area 3: Overall Readiness

Action 9: Assess risks of hybrid work

Action 10: Assess the suitability of positions for hybrid work

Action 11: Assess regularly hybrid work conditions in organization and adapt to changes

INTERVENTION AREA 1: KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT

OBJECTIVE: ESTABLISH A COMMON UNDERSTANDING AND GUIDANCE FOR HYBRID WORK PRACTICES

Action 1: Develop and introduce hybrid work guidelines

Short description

Define the core principles and expectations for hybrid work in Tartu City Government. Once finalized, the guidelines will be communicated to the entire organization and reviewed regularly as needed.

What success looks like

Clear, well-communicated hybrid work guidelines are documented and easily accessible to all employees. Employees and managers understand and follow the guidelines consistently.

Timing

Jan 2026 - mid 2027

Action owner

Employee Experience Manager

Stakeholders

Employee Experience Manager, HR, IT, Public Services Development Team (PSDT), Managers, Employees

Finance and resources

City budget (salaries, technology costs, etc.)

Action readiness

Ready to start in January 2026

Risks

Risk	Measure
Guidelines are too rigid or too vague	Ensure guidelines are clear but flexible. Include use cases and examples. Pilot the guidelines with a small group before full rollout.
Unequal treatment or perceptions of fairness	Standardize expectations while allowing team-level customization. Train managers on fair implementation. Communicate top-management's support on hybrid working.
Poor communication of the guidelines	Use multiple channels (email, intranet, forum) to roll out the guidelines. Provide ongoing access to materials.
Change in top management alters priorities or support	Ensure that the business case for hybrid work is clearly documented, including productivity data, employee satisfaction, and alignment with organizational goals. Build broad support for the guidelines from multiple levels and departments (HR, IT, legal, operations), not just top leadership, to ensure continuity.

Activities

Activity	Dates	Outputs	Responsible	Partners	Related activities	Resources
Top management taking a clear stance on hybrid working and enabling it for employees	End of 2026	Hybrid work officially embedded into HR or workplace policies	Employee Experience Manager	Top management; HR	Conducting meeting with top management; updating HR and workplace policies; communication	Human resources, time, management support
Mapping all categories, areas where guidelines need to be developed	End of 2026	List of areas/categories	Employee Experience Manager	HR; IT; PSDT; Heads of services and departments, Heads of areas	Conducting a current state assessment; reviewing external best practices	Human resources, time, technology choice
Preparing instructions in every related area (e.g. occupational health, information exchange, security, work organization, etc.)	Middle of 2027	Detailed instructions for every area	Employee Experience Manager	HR; IT; PSDT; Heads of services and departments, Heads of areas	Creating a template or structure for instructions; assigning content owners; gather relevant input from workshops; review regulatory requirements	Human resources, time, technology choice
Creating the guidelines document	Middle of 2027	Guidelines document	Employee Experience Manager	HR; IT; PSDT	Defining the structure and format; compile the content; ensure consistent style; incorporate visual elements	Human resources, time, technology choice
Introducing guidelines to the entire organization	Middle of 2027	News in intranet; Presentation in forum; Confirmation from every employee	Employee Experience Manager	HR; IT; PSDT; Heads of services and departments, Heads of areas	Develop a communication plan; create materials; host forum; create feedback channel	Human resources, time, technology choice
Implementing behavior according to guidelines	Middle of 2027	Employee feedback reflects understanding and application of guidelines	Employee Experience Manager	HR; IT; PSDT; Heads of services and departments, Heads of areas	Communicating guidelines clearly and consistently; train managers; gather feedback	Human resources, time, technology choice

INTERVENTION AREA 1: KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT

OBJECTIVE: ESTABLISH A COMMON UNDERSTANDING AND GUIDANCE FOR HYBRID WORK PRACTICES

Action 2: Implement training platform and develop training materials

Short description

Design and launch a training platform with tailored content to support employees and managers in adopting hybrid work practices. Develop engaging materials (e.g. videos, guides, interactive modules) that cover key topics.

What success looks like

Training platform consists of at least 5 training courses and 70% of employees have completed at least 3 of them.

Timing

Oct 2025 - Dec 2027

Action owner

Employee Experience Manager

Stakeholders

Employee Experience Manager, HR, IT, Public Services Development Team (PSDT), Managers, Employees

Finance and resources

City budget (salaries, technology costs, etc.)

Action readiness

Testing Action proved that training is necessary. In addition, it gave an insight into what training is needed.

Risks

Risk	Measure
Low engagement with the training platform	Promote through multiple internal channels (emails, team meetings, intranet). Make training mandatory or tie to performance reviews.
Content does not meet employee needs or expectations	Involve employees and managers in the content design phase. Run pilot sessions or gather early feedback to refine materials. Offer varied content formats (videos, interactive modules, quick guides).
Platform is difficult to access or use	Choose a user-friendly platform with mobile and desktop compatibility. Test usability before launch. Provide clear instructions or an onboarding walkthrough.
Delays in content development or platform implementation	Assign clear owners and deadlines for each deliverable. Prioritize key modules for early release while others are in progress.

Activities

Activity	Dates	Outputs	Responsible	Partners	Related activities	Resources
Selecting and implementing a training platform	End of 2025	Training platform	PSDT	IT, Employee Experience Manager	Describing requirements for the platform; comparing options; conducting procurement; setting up the platform, access etc.	Human resources, time, budget (licences), technology
Creating or ordering training materials	End of 2026	5 training materials	Employee Experience Manager	IT, PSDT, HR	Prioritizing the training materials; describing requirements for the content and trainings; conducting procurement; preparing content ourselves; setting materials up to the platform	Human resources, time, budget (ordering materials)
Testing and improving training materials	End of 2026	5 tested materials; list of improvements	Employee Experience Manager	IT, PSDT, HR	Choosing testgroup; conducting testing; gathering feedback; making improvements	Human resources, time, budget (ordering materials)
Introducing trainings to all employees	End of 2026	70% of employees have completed at least 3 trainings	Employee Experience Manager	IT, PSDT, HR	Communication; supervision; gathering feedback	Human resources, time
Further implementation of the trainings	From 2027	More training materials	Employee Experience Manager	IT, PSDT, HR	Describing requirements for the content and trainings; conducting procurement; preparing content ourselves; setting materials up to the platform	Human resources, time, budget (ordering materials)

INTERVENTION AREA 1: KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT

OBJECTIVE: ESTABLISH A COMMON UNDERSTANDING AND GUIDANCE FOR HYBRID WORK PRACTICES

Action 3: Develop a Telework Ambassadors Program

Short description

Identify and empower a group of experienced teleworkers to serve as ambassadors who promote best practices, provide support, and champion remote work culture across the organization.

What success looks like

A diverse group of trained and active telework ambassadors is established across departments. Employees report increased awareness, confidence, and satisfaction with remote work practices.

Timing

2028

Action owner

Employee Experience Manager

Stakeholders

Employee Experience Manager, Managers, Employees

Finance and resources

City budget (salaries, technology costs, etc.)

Action readiness

Waits for the development and introduction of hybrid work guidelines.

Risks

Risk	Measure
Low interest from employees to become ambassadors	Create a sense of community, target the right people, promote success stories, secure managerial support, keep the commitment reasonable
Low engagement from ambassadors	Clearly define roles, provide recognition, and ensure ambassadors have time allocated for their duties.
Inconsistent messaging or practices among ambassadors	Provide a structured onboarding process, guidelines, and standardized resources to ensure consistency in advice and communication.
Limited visibility or awareness of the program	Launch an internal communication campaign (internal web, forum), integrate ambassadors into onboarding and team meetings, and regularly highlight their work.

Activities

Activity	Dates	Outputs	Responsible	Partners	Related activities	Resources
Developing the program (knowledge, meeting interval, goal, etc.)	2028	Program Manual	Employee Experience Manager	Potential Ambassadors	Meetings with stakeholders, gathering feedback from employees	Human resources, time, budget
Developing the onboarding training	2028	Onboarding training on e-training platform	Employee Experience Manager	PSDT	Developing the training material, developing e-training, testing	Human resources, time, technology
Introducing the program and creating open call for ambassadors	2028	News in intranet, form for registering	Employee Experience Manager	Potential Ambassadors	Creating news in the internal web, creating form for registering, gathering registrations	Human resources, time, technology
Onboarding ambassadors (training)	2028	Completed training by all ambassadors	Employee Experience Manager	Ambassadors	Introducing the training for ambassadors, monitoring the completion	Human resources, time, technology
Introducing the ambassadors and their roles	2028	News in intranet, introduction in departments	Employee Experience Manager	Ambassadors	Creating news in the internal web, ambassadors introduce themselves in team meetings	Human resources, time
Gathering feedback and improving the program	continuous	Feedback given via feedback channel	Employee Experience Manager	Employees, Ambassadors	Creating channel for feedback, analyzing feedback, making improvements in the program, training etc.	Human resources, time, technology

INTERVENTION AREA 1: KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT

OBJECTIVE: ESTABLISH A COMMON UNDERSTANDING AND GUIDANCE FOR HYBRID WORK PRACTICES

Action 4: Learn and share hybrid work experiences

Short description

We stay up to date with work-life developments concerning remote working, learn from others and share experiences with others.

What success looks like

We are up to date with remote work trends, learning and sharing experiences with other institutions regularly.

Timing

Every year

Action owner

Employee Experience Manager

Stakeholders

Employee Experience Manager, Managers, Employees

Finance and resources

City budget (salaries)

Action readiness

It is already in motion and happening continuously.

Risks

Risk	Measure
Remote work may lose popularity and relevance, reducing interest in its improvement	Promote remote work best practices, invest in tools/training, and maintain visibility of remote work benefits
The right kind of new information about remote work does not reach us	We actively participate in professional associations and networks related to work life to ensure relevant information reaches us.
We give more than we get	We balance the sharing and ensure our organization gains as much as it contributes.

Activities

Activity	Dates	Outputs	Responsible	Partners	Related activities	Resources
Staying active and participating in professional associations and network related to work life. For example, PARE, HR Selts, etc	continuously	We are active participants in professional associations and networks related to work life (PARE, HR Selts and other)	Employee Experience Manager, ITSO Cloud Services Administrator	PT, ITSO, department heads, service heads	We participate in events created by PARE, HR Selts and others. We read the news and participate in discussions related to work life.	Human resources, time
Participating in training days on work-life developments	continuously	We participate on training days at least 1-2 a year.	Employee Experience Manager, ITSO Cloud Services Administrator	PT, ITSO, department heads, service heads	We identify relevant and up-to-date training in the field of working life. Participate in those.	Human resources, time
Following IT developments supporting remote collaboration	continuously	Updated overview of remote work tools.	ITSO Cloud Services Administrator	EEM, ITSO, department heads, service heads	Track updates in collaboration tools, software, and digital solutions	Human resources, time

INTERVENTION AREA 2: TECHNOLOGY AND INFORMATION SECURITY

OBJECTIVE: EQUIP STAFF WITH SECURE DIGITAL TOOLS AND RELIABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Action 5: Ensure digital devices and tools

Short description

Provide employees with reliable access to the hardware, software, and collaboration tools needed to work effectively.

What success looks like

All employees are equipped with the appropriate, functioning digital devices (e.g., laptops, mobile phones, headsets) and access to essential software and collaboration platforms. Employees can transition smoothly between remote and in-office work with no loss in productivity or connectivity.

Timing

Continuous

Action owner

IT Department

Stakeholders

Managers, Employees

Finance and resources

City budget (salaries, technology costs, connectivity costs)

Action readiness

Already started and will continue with next procurements.

Risks

Risk	Measure
Inadequate or outdated devices	Conduct regular assessments of hardware needs, maintain a refresh cycle for devices
Employees lack training on tools	Provide onboarding sessions, quick-access help materials, offer helpdesk support
Compatibility issues with remote/in-office setups	Standardize equipment where possible, provide help materials, offer helpdesk support
Poor internet connectivity at home	Offer mobile hotspots for employees with limited access; provide guidance on optimizing home connectivity

Activities

Activity	Dates	Outputs	Responsible	Partners	Related activities	Resources
Making procurements for laptops only	continuous	Laptops as computers	IT department	Managers	Set the requirements for laptops, make the procurement, give laptops to employees	Budget, human resources, time
Supplying centrally managed mobile phones	2026	All employees have centrally managed work mobile phones	IT department	Managers	Map the needs for mobile phones, buy the phones, set up central administration and policies, introduce the policies to employees	Budget, human resources, time, technology
Providing access to essential software	continuous	All essential software is accessed via secure connection	IT department	Managers, Systems' Main Users	Rights management	Budget, human resources, time, technology
Onboarding "how to use" sessions	continuous	With every new device, the session is offered for employee	IT department	Employees	Prepare the sessions, offer the sessions	Human resources, time
Monitoring and maintaining a refresh cycle for devices	continuous	End Of Life of device is being monitored, new device is being supplied	IT department	Managers, Employees	Set up the monitoring system and notifications, buy new devices, offer new devices, offer "how to use" sessions	Human resources, time, technology, budget

INTERVENTION AREA 2: TECHNOLOGY AND INFORMATION SECURITY

OBJECTIVE: EQUIP STAFF WITH SECURE DIGITAL TOOLS AND RELIABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Action 6: Develop hybrid work security policies

Short description

Establish and introduce clear, organization-wide security policies tailored to the hybrid work model.

What success looks like

Comprehensive, up-to-date policies are in place that address all relevant aspects of hybrid work security (e.g., remote access, device use, data protection, acceptable use, incident reporting). Employees understand and follow the policies, demonstrated through completion of training and regular compliance checks.

Timing

From Jan - Dec 2026

Action owner

Head of Digital Development and Information Security

Stakeholders

IT, Managers, Employees

Finance and resources

City budget (salaries, technology costs)

Action readiness

Initial phase

Risks

Risk	Measure
Policies are too generic or outdated	Involve IT in policy development. Tailor policies to reflect actual work practices and threat landscape. Schedule regular reviews and updates.
Low employee awareness or understanding	Use plain language and visual summaries. Include policies in onboarding. Conduct mandatory training with clear examples.
Resistance from employees or teams	Explain the “why” behind each policy to increase buy-in. Make policies practical and balanced.
Shadow IT or unauthorized tools	Implement monitoring for shadow IT. Offer approved alternatives that meet user needs. Educate staff about the risks of unapproved tools.
Technology and policies not aligned	Ensure tools (VPN, MFA, MDM) support the policy requirements.

Activities

Activity	Dates	Outputs	Responsible	Partners	Related activities	Resources
Developing policies	2026	Hybrid work security policy	Head of Digital Development and Information Security	IT department	Meetings with stakeholders, writing the policies	Human resources, time
Introducing policies to all positions who can do hybrid work	2026	Confirmations from employees to comply	Head of Digital Development and Information Security	Employees, Managers	Send the policies out, monitor the confirmations	Human resources, time, technology
Including policies in onboarding	2026	Reading policy is mandatory activity during onboarding	Head of Digital Development and Information Security	Employee Experience Manager, Managers	Meetings with stakeholders, updating the onboarding process description	Human resources, time, technology
Monitoring policy compliance	from 2026	List of improvements	Head of Digital Development and Information Security	IT department	Gathering feedback from employees and managers	Human resources, time

INTERVENTION AREA 2: TECHNOLOGY AND INFORMATION SECURITY

OBJECTIVE: EQUIP STAFF WITH SECURE DIGITAL TOOLS AND RELIABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Action 7: Monitor and manage security incidents

Short description

Continuously monitor and analyze security incidents across both remote and on-site digital environments to detect threats, vulnerabilities, and potential breaches. Implement centralized tools and processes for real-time logging, alerting, and response.

What success looks like

No major breaches or data loss incidents, and all minor events are logged, resolved, and reviewed.

Timing

From Oct 2025

Action owner

Head of Digital Development and Information Security

Stakeholders

IT, Managers, Employees, Chief Data Protection Officer

Finance and resources

City budget (salaries, technology costs)

Action readiness

Initial phase

Risks

Risk	Measure
Lack of employee awareness of threats	Conduct regular security awareness training; simulate phishing attacks; provide clear reporting channels for suspicious activity.
Incomplete incident response process	Develop and test a formal Incident Management Plan, assign clear roles and responsibilities, conduct tabletop exercises.
Lack of security team awareness of managing incidents	Provide training for all relevant staff.
Managing incidents takes too much time	Create playbooks for common incidents, assign clear roles.

Activities

Activity	Dates	Outputs	Responsible	Partners	Related activities	Resources
Implementing Incident Register	2025	Incident Register	Head of Digital Development and Information Security	IT department	Choosing technology; describing the requirements and workflows for the register	Human resources, time, technology
Developing Incident Management Plan	2025	Incident Management Plan	Head of Digital Development and Information Security	IT department	Meetings with stakeholders; agreements on workflows and roles	Human resources, time, technology
Introducing Register and Plan to organization	2026	Teams session, news in intranet	Head of Digital Development and Information Security		Planning the communication	Human resources, time, technology
Monitoring incident reporting and management	from 2025	List of improvements	Head of Digital Development and Information Security	IT department; Employees	Regular check-in's with stakeholders, gathering feedback from stakeholders	Human resources, time, technology

INTERVENTION AREA 2: TECHNOLOGY AND INFORMATION SECURITY

OBJECTIVE: EQUIP STAFF WITH SECURE DIGITAL TOOLS AND RELIABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Action 8: Improve technical security measures

Short description

Introduce and maintain technical safeguards (e.g., firewalls, encryption, multi-factor authentication, secure VPNs, endpoint protection) to protect organizational data and digital assets.

What success looks like

Employees feel confident and supported in working securely across devices and locations. External audits or compliance checks confirm the effectiveness of security measures. Staff use secure, reliable digital tools without disruption to their work. Security incidents are reduced, and response times improve when incidents occur.

Timing

From 2026

Action owner

Head of Digital Development and Information Security

Stakeholders

IT Department, Employees

Finance and resources

City budget (salaries, technology costs)

Action readiness

Basic security measures are in place, but there is a need and possibilities for improvement.

Risks

Risk	Measure
Employees bypass security measures due to complexity	Provide user-friendly tools, training, and ongoing support.
New vulnerabilities from unpatched systems or outdated software	Establish regular patch management and automated updates.
Security tools create performance or accessibility issues for staff	Pilot tools before rollout, monitor feedback, and balance usability with security.
Over-reliance on technology without proper monitoring	Implement continuous monitoring, incident response plans, and regular penetration testing.

Activities

Activity	Dates	Outputs	Responsible	Partners	Related activities	Resources
Identifying the measures	2026	List of measures	Head of Digital Development and Information Security	IT department	Meetings with stakeholders, working through Estonian Information Security Standard	Human resources, time
Developing measures implementation plan	2026	Measures Implementation Plan with dates and responsible people	Head of Digital Development and Information Security	IT department	Develop technical solution to manage the plan	Human resources, time, technology
Introducing technical measures implemented to organization	2026	Training, guidelines	Head of Digital Development and Information Security	IT department, Employees, Managers	Send the guidelines, organize training materials	Human resources, time, technology
Monitoring the implementation of the plan	from 2026	List of improvements and changes to plan	Head of Digital Development and Information Security	IT department	Regular meetings with responsible people	Human resources, time

INTERVENTION AREA 3: OVERALL READINESS

OBJECTIVE: REGULARLY ASSESS AND ADAPT TO CHANGING HYBRID WORK CONDITIONS

Action 9: Assess risks of hybrid work

Short description

Identify, analyze, and document potential risks associated with hybrid work arrangements across operational, technological, cultural, and compliance dimensions.

What success looks like

Risks are identified and mitigation measures are defined, prioritized and embedded into policies and processes. Hybrid work continues smoothly with minimal disruption from foreseen issues.

Timing

From Jan - Dec 2026

Action owner

Employee Experience Manager

Stakeholders

Employee Experience Manager, HR, IT, Public Services Development Team (PSDT), Managers, Employees

Finance and resources

City budget (salaries, technology costs)

Action readiness

Risks related to information security are already assessed. Other risks will be assessed before the development of hybrid work guidelines.

Risks

Risk	Measure
Incomplete risk identification leading to blind spots	Involve cross-functional teams (HR, IT, Security, Legal) in the assessment.
Identified risks are not acted upon, making the exercise ineffective	Link risk assessment outcomes directly to action plans, assign ownership, and track progress.
Rapidly changing external conditions render assessments outdated	Schedule periodic reviews (e.g., quarterly or biannual) and include emerging risks scanning.
Overemphasis on risks could discourage hybrid work adoption	Present risks alongside opportunities and emphasize balanced, evidence-based decision-making.

Activities

Activity	Dates	Outputs	Responsible	Partners	Related activities	Resources
Identifying the vulnerabilities, threats and risks	2026	List of risks	Employee Experience Manager	IT department, HR department, Head of Digital Development and Information Security, Managers	Meetings with stakeholders	Human resources, time
Analyzing and assessing the risks	2026	List of risks that need mitigation	Employee Experience Manager	IT department, HR department, Head of Digital Development and Information Security, Managers	Meetings with stakeholders	Human resources, time
Developing mitigation measures with dates and responsible people	2026	Measures Implementation Plan with dates and responsible people	Employee Experience Manager	IT department, HR department, Head of Digital Development and Information Security, Managers	Develop technical solution to manage the measures	Human resources, time, technology
Introducing measures into existing policies and processes	2026	Improved guidelines and processes	Employee Experience Manager	IT department, HR department, Head of Digital Development and Information Security, Managers	Send the guidelines, organize training materials	Human resources, time, technology
Monitoring the conditions and adapt to new risks	from 2026	List of improvements and changes to risks and measures	Employee Experience Manager	IT department, Managers, HR department	Regular meetings with responsible people	Human resources, time

INTERVENTION AREA 3: OVERALL READINESS

OBJECTIVE: REGULARLY ASSESS AND ADAPT TO CHANGING HYBRID WORK CONDITIONS

Action 10: Assess the suitability of positions for hybrid work

Short description

Systematically review and evaluate each role within the organization to determine its suitability for hybrid work. This includes assessing job responsibilities, required collaboration, security needs, technology dependencies, and customer-facing requirements.

What success looks like

A clear framework exists for evaluating positions against hybrid work suitability. Employees and managers understand why certain roles are hybrid-eligible and others are not. Decisions are transparent, consistent, and perceived as fair.

Timing

From 2026

Action owner

Employee Experience Manager

Stakeholders

Employee Experience Manager, Managers, Employees

Finance and resources

City budget (salaries)

Action readiness

Ready to start 2026

Risks

Risk	Measure
Managers do not see the importance of the assessment, and they do not participate	Clear communication and strong support from the leadership.
Perceptions of unfairness if some roles are allowed hybrid work and others are not	Apply transparent, objective criteria; communicate decisions clearly; provide appeals or review mechanisms.
Employee dissatisfaction or disengagement if roles are deemed unsuitable for hybrid work	Offer alternative flexibility measures (e.g., flexible hours, partial remote days); provide clear rationale and support.
Productivity declines if unsuitable roles are mistakenly approved for hybrid work	Pilot hybrid arrangements; monitor performance; adjust quickly if issues arise.
Framework becomes outdated as technology and organizational needs evolve.	Schedule regular reviews (e.g., annually) to reassess suitability considering new tools, processes, and external conditions.

Activities

Activity	Dates	Outputs	Responsible	Partners	Related activities	Resources
Creating a process, including a survey for managers to assess the suitability of their department's positions for hybrid work	2026	A survey has been completed to assess the suitability of positions for hybrid work.	Employee Experience Manager	HR department, department heads	Create a survey for the managers to fill for assessing positions in their department. Create a thorough process for the assessment.	Human resources, time, technology
Conducting an initial survey with each department head	End of 2026	We know the suitability of all positions for hybrid work	Employee Experience Manager	HR department, department heads	Send the surveys with good communication to the managers and let them assess all the positions in their department.	Human resources, time, technology
Introducing the results of the survey to the organization	End of 2026	The suitability of positions for hybrid work is available throughout the organization	Employee Experience Manager	HR department, department heads	Publish a newspost in our intranet, where we show the results of the surveys conducted.	Human resources, time
Conducting an assessment whenever a new position is added or the nature of work in an existing position changes.	From 2027	The assessment of the suitability of positions for hybrid work is up-to-date.	Employee Experience Manager	HR department, department heads	Include the assessment of positions into the process of creating a new position and hiring a new person for a role.	Human resources, time

INTERVENTION AREA 3: OVERALL READINESS

OBJECTIVE: REGULARLY ASSESS AND ADAPT TO CHANGING HYBRID WORK CONDITIONS

Action 11: Assess regularly hybrid work conditions in organization and adapt to changes

Short description

Regularly assess the current state of hybrid work implementation across the organization through feedback, data, and observation. Identify challenges, gaps, and opportunities for improvement, and implement timely adjustments to guidelines, tools, or practices to ensure ongoing effectiveness and relevance.

What success looks like

Regular feedback is collected and analyzed once a year, clear improvements are made based on feedback. Guidelines stay relevant and are reviewed once a year.

Timing

Every year

Action owner

Employee Experience Manager

Stakeholders

Employee Experience Manager, Managers, Employees

Finance and resources

City budget (salaries)

Action readiness

Baseline is from 2024, regular assessment will continue after implementing hybrid work guidelines in 2026

Risks

Risk	Measure
Low survey participation	Ensure surveys are short, relevant, and easy to access. Send multiple reminders to encourage response.
Biased feedback	Ensure anonymous responses to promote honesty.
Delayed action on feedback or slow improvements	Set clear timelines and ownership for implementing improvements. Prioritize feedback based on urgency and impact.
Unclear or inconsistent communication of changes	Provide regular, transparent updates about changes being made and the impact of feedback.

Activities

Activity	Dates	Outputs	Responsible	Partners	Related activities	Resources
Creating a survey to assess the hybrid work conditions	2024	Survey	Employee Experience Manager	Managers, Employees	Design survey questions; choose survey format and tool; test the survey; ensure anonymity and data privacy	Human resources, technology choice, time, budget
Conducting the survey	every year from 2026	Data from the survey	Employee Experience Manager	Managers, Employees	Set timeline for launch, close and analyzing; launch the survey; send reminders; track participation; prepare data for analysis	Human resources, time
Analyzing results and trends	every year	Summary report of key findings; trends and comparisons over time; list of priority areas for improvement	Employee Experience Manager	Managers, Employees	Segment data by key groups; identify patterns and key trends; summarize findings; develop recommendations and prioritize areas for improvement	Human resources, time
Publishing the results to organization	every year	News in intranet	Employee Experience Manager	Managers, Employees	Develop visual and communication materials; publish in intranet	Human resources, time
Making improvements in practices, guidelines	every year	Reviewed and updated guidelines	Employee Experience Manager	Managers, Employees	Engage stakeholders for input; review existing guidelines and practices; create new content; communicate the changes	Human resources, time

Implementation framework

Owner of the action plan

Beyond the responsibilities allocated for each specific action and activity, the body responsible for overseeing the implementation of this action plan will be the Employee Experience Manager. This position is responsible for shaping how employees experience work — from onboarding to day-to-day collaboration. Since remote and hybrid models significantly affect how people connect, work, and feel supported, it falls squarely within this position's scope.

Stakeholders' engagement

The participatory approach will continue into the implementation phase as the stakeholders (members of ULG) have been engaged in planning the activities and know their roles and responsibilities. The last ULG meeting was organized with the aim of agreeing on all commitments and activities for the coming years. Planned activities are also part of these positions' everyday responsibilities.

Budget

The action plan does not require significant investments and therefore all the actions and activities of this plan will be funded by the city budget. The main expenses include staff salaries, licences for technology, and outsourcing services (e.g. preparing training materials).

Timeline

The vision has been set, that by **the end of 2028**, Tartu City Government will have accessible and secure hybrid work environment, supported by clear hybrid work policies and skilled staff, to ensure the quality of city services and citizens satisfaction. The detailed timeline of the actions has shown in Figure 9.

Action	2026		2027		2028	
	Jan - June	July - Dec	Jan - June	July - Dec	Jan - June	July - Dec
Develop and introduce hybrid work guidelines						
Implement training platform and develop training materials						
Develop Telework Ambassadors Program						
Learn and share hybrid work experiences						
Ensure digital devices and tools						
Develop hybrid work security policies						
Monitor and manage security incidents						
Improve technical security measures						
Assess risks of hybrid work						

Assessing the suitability of positions for hybrid work
Assess regularly hybrid work conditions in organization and adapt to changes

Risk assessment for the implementation

In addition to the risk assessment made for all the actions in chapter 3, implementing this action plan in general also meets some risks that need mitigation.

Risk	Measure
Lack of leadership alignment or commitment due to upcoming elections	Involve top management early in planning. Clearly communicate strategic benefits.
Stakeholders' resistance or confusion	Communicate early, often, and transparently. Share "what's in it for me" messages.
Implementation fatigue or slow execution	Break down the action plan into phases. Assign clear owners and deadlines. Celebrate progress and quick wins to maintain momentum. Test small before scale big.
Misalignment with broader HR or organizational strategy	Align hybrid work goals with HR, IT, and business strategies. Integrate hybrid work into policies, onboarding, and performance management.

Monitoring

The owner of the IAP, Employee Experience Manager, monitors that the specific objectives and indicators will be met as planned. This requires cooperation with stakeholders and timely reporting from them. Employee Experience Manager collects the necessary data from the source of information at least twice a year. If there are deviations from the plan (and there definitely will be as the situation changes rapidly), the plan will be reviewed and adapted with stakeholders.

Specific objective	Results	Source of information
Establish a common understanding and guidance for hybrid work practices	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Hybrid work guidelines are developed and introduced to employees by the middle of 2027. The training platform is implemented, and 5 trainings are developed by the middle of 2027. 70% of employees have completed at least 3 trainings. A program for telework ambassadors is developed by 2028 and there are at least 5 active ambassadors participating in the program. 	Employee Experience Manager
Equip staff with secure digital tools and reliable infrastructure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of the digital tools provided for employees are mobile and secure. The number of security incident notifications is increasing 50%, as the 	Head of Digital Development and Information Security & IT Department

	number of incidents is decreasing 30% yearly.	
	6. Remote work security policy has been created and introduced to all employees by mid-2026.	
Regularly assess and adapt to changing hybrid work conditions	<div>7. 100% of the positions have been assessed for the suitability of remote work by the end of 2026, and a process has been created for continuous evaluation.</div> <div>8. Once a year, an assessment survey of the hybrid work conditions is carried out among the employees.</div> <div>9. Risk analysis has been conducted and measures to mitigate risks are described.</div>	Employee Experience Manager & Managers

Introduction of the IAP to other institutions

As this IAP is intended not only for Tartu City Government but also for other local governments in Estonia to improve their hybrid work environment, this IAP will in 2026 be introduced to other interested institutions in collaboration with Estonian Association of Cities and Municipalities.

Conclusion

The regulation and implementation of hybrid work at the public sector level is still in its infancy, both in Estonia and abroad. We have studied various good practices on how other public sector organisations have implemented hybrid work in their teams, and with this experience in mind, we have put together an action plan to achieve our vision: **“By the end of 2028, Tartu City Government will have accessible and secure hybrid work environment, supported by clear hybrid work policies and skilled staff, to ensure the quality of city services and citizens satisfaction”**. The vision helps to attract and keep talented people in public sector and thereby improve the quality of public services and ensure citizens satisfaction.

A lot of preliminary work has been done to achieve the goal set within the framework of the project, and the action plan has been developed, with goals, activities, and indicators, as well as specific responsibilities and deadlines, providing specific guidelines on how to move forward.

The URBACT toolbox, expert feedback, various forums and presentations have provided valuable input for thinking through the action plan as multifaceted as possible.

The IAP will be the workplan for City of Tartu, but it also can be used as a good practice for other municipalities or public authorities for driving their organisation hybrid/remote as well.

Key lessons for other organizations

1. Start with a Needs Assessment

- ↳ Conduct surveys among employees and managers to understand current practices, challenges, and expectations.
- ↳ Use different tools to identify gaps and tailor solutions (problem tree, personas, etc).

2. Build a strong Local Stakeholder Group (ULG)

- ↳ Include representatives from various departments, different leadership level.
- ↳ Ensure regular meetings and active participation to maintain momentum and ownership.
- ↳ Learn from other organizations' best practices.

3. Set SMART goals

4. Measure progress and celebrate even small successes

5. General recommendations

- ↳ **Think long-term:** Plan for sustainability beyond initial implementation.
- ↳ **Engage stakeholders early:** Build trust and shared ownership.
- ↳ **Test and iterate:** Pilot solutions before scaling.
- ↳ **Learn from others:** Use transnational/national networks to exchange ideas.
- ↳ **Address culture:** Hybrid work is not just technical - it requires leadership and mindset shifts.