EQ CULTIVATE

Mental health of young professionals in remote work

Needs analysis report about Spain, 2025

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**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Content list

1. About this report

This report explores the mental health experiences and challenges faced by young professionals working remotely and examines the factors contributing to burnout in digital workspaces in Spain. By combining survey responses with facilitated discussions, the report provides a comprehensive understanding on patterns regarding mental wellbeing and daily practices in remote work.

It is a key component of the needs analysis phase in the EQ CULTIVATE project, and the findings will guide the development of educational modules.

About EQ CULTIVATE

It is an Erasmus+ funded KA210 project dedicated to boosting the well-being and efficiency of young professionals working in hybrid and smart environments. Our mission is to tackle and reduce burnout by strategically applying emotional intelligence and promoting inclusive work practices.

Our objectives include improving emotional intelligence skills, enhancing peer social interaction, identifying and reducing youth-specific burnout factors, fostering social and work inclusion, and promoting healthy technology management.

By focusing on these areas, EQ CULTIVATE aims to create a supportive environment where young professionals feel valued, connected, and equipped to thrive in the evolving landscape of remote and hybrid work. Read more about our activities on the website eqcultivate.eu.

2. Remote work and mental health in Spain

Across Europe, employee mental well-being has become a top priority for companies looking to nurture healthier and more productive workplaces. Spain, with its unique cultural and economic landscape, faces specific challenges and opportunities when it comes to fostering workplace well-being. The relationship between remote work and mental health in Spain has been the focus of various studies, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The shift to teleworking brought both advantages and challenges, influencing employees' mental well-being in different ways.

2.1. Telecommuting in Spain: trends, youth participation, and mental health impact

According to the data of the Encuesta de Población Activa (EPA) prepared by the INE, in the second quarter of 2023, 7.3% of employed people in Spain developed their professional activity from their home more than half of the days they worked; In total 1,527,800 people teleworking. A figure to which, in addition, we must add 6.6% that ensures that teleworked occasionally (1,381,200 people).

Specifically, remote work adoption in Spain varies notably across age groups. In 2023, data indicates that 73.6% of employees aged 16 to 24 did not have the opportunity to work remotely. This contrasts with older demographics, where a higher percentage had access to teleworking options. Specifically, individuals aged 45 to 54 represented the largest group with remote work opportunities[1].

This limited access to remote work can affect young people's employment prospects and work-life balance, especially as the global job market increasingly embraces telecommuting. The lower participation in remote work among younger Spaniards also underscores the need for more inclusive policies that provide youth with equal opportunities to work remotely.

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[1] https://www.statista.com/statistics/1124442/employees-with-telecommuting-in-spain-by-age-and-frequency/

In general, according to the latest Survey on Equipment and Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Households published by the National Statistics Institute (INE), the percentage of employed people who work in remote in Spain has increased in the last year to represent 15.1% of all workers. As for the territories in which working in remote is most widespread, the study shows that it is in those regions with a larger business fabric. In first place is the Community of Madrid (where 26.7% of those employed worked in remote), followed by Catalonia (21.5%) and Andalusia (13.5%)[2].

Unfortunately, there is limited data on the mental health trends of young people engaged in remote or hybrid work. However, Spain's overall demand for workplace mental health support aligns with the European average, with 38% of employees seeking mental health resources. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated anxiety, depression, and workplace stress, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive mental health solutions. Additionally, the rapid expansion of digital technologies has significantly affected the mental well-being of Spanish youth. Increased internet use, particularly on social media, has been linked to a rise in behavioral and psychological challenges. Research highlights that young people—especially girls aged 15 to 19—experience heightened anxiety and depression, partly due to the pressures of maintaining a curated online presence. This growing concern raises questions about the long-term psychological impact of excessive screen time and digital interactions[3].

As consequence, there is a growing recognition of the need for safe digital spaces for youth to protect their mental well-being. According to a study by ifeelonline.com, approximately 38% of Spanish employees consider mental well-being a top priority, which aligns with the European average. This highlights the increasing awareness of psychological health in the workplace and the demand for better support mechanisms for employees[4].

Moreover, an analysis of new trends by Randstad emphasizes the importance of mental health aspects in the hybrid work format (43%) and flexibility (30%). Despite the preference for remote or hybrid work models by 63% of workers, the challenges associated with working from home include fatigue, difficulty

[2] https://www.ine.es/dyngs/INEbase/es/operacion.htm?c=estadistica_C&cid=1254736176741&idp=1254735976608&menu=ultiDatos
[3] https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/online-media-and-adolescent-mental-health-crisis
[4] https://ifeelonline.com/

disconnecting from work, and a consequent deterioration of relational aspects and the sense of belonging.

2.1. Mental health in remote work in the balearic islands

In the Balearic Islands, mental health and well-being in remote and hybrid work environments have become an increasingly important issue, especially after the rise of flexible working models post-pandemic. The blurring of boundaries between home and workspaces has led to growing psychological pressure, particularly among younger workers, resulting in challenges such as burnout, anxiety, and work-related stress.

In response to these rising concerns, local authorities and organizations have started to implement support programs aimed at improving mental health in these new working conditions. For example, while initiatives targeting schools have gained more visibility, such as the pioneering program launched in September 2024 with 39 psychologists working in secondary schools and vocational training centers, there is still a gap when it comes to specific programs tailored to remote workers or hybrid workplaces. The mentioned educational initiative aims to provide psychologists who will work across multiple schools, helping to identify mental health issues and apply rapid interventions, but it does not yet extend to the remote workforce.

Additionally, local mental health organizations, such as the Balearic Foundation for Mental Health, are starting to focus on workers in remote environments. These organizations provide awareness-raising activities and counseling services related to stress management and mental health, and there is potential for these efforts to expand further into the workplace

However, while awareness is growing, a comprehensive and accessible support system for remote workers in the Balearic Islands is still in its early stages.

2.2. Spanish initiatives to support mental health in remote work

In recent years, Spain has taken significant steps to address the challenges that arise at the intersection of youth, remote work, and mental health. Recognizing the impact of digital work environments on psychological well-being, national and local

authorities have introduced various policies and initiatives aimed at promoting healthier work-life balance, preventing burnout, and fostering digital well-being among young professionals:

- Spain's **"Desconexión Digital"** (Digital Disconnection) law, implemented in 2021, mandates that companies provide employees with the right to disconnect from digital devices outside of working hours. This regulation aims to address the rising issue of burnout and stress due to the pressure of being constantly available via digital means. While the law primarily targets traditional workers, it indirectly benefits youth working remotely by encouraging employers to establish clearer boundaries between personal and work time. It is also a step toward recognizing the mental health risks associated with remote work, including burnout caused by the constant digital connectivity that many young people struggle to balance.

- Mental Health Action Plan 2022-2024: This plan includes the establishment of the 024 hotline, which offers free, 24/7 support for individuals, particularly targeting the youth demographic. The hotline has become a vital resource, with one-third of callers being under 30 years old, addressing concerns about mental health crises and suicidal behavior.

- Several local initiatives in regions like **Catalonia** and **Madrid** have started promoting digital well-being and work-life balance for remote workers, including the youth demographic. These initiatives often involve partnerships between local government bodies, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations, providing resources to combat burnout in remote work environments. For example, **Fundación Telefónica**, in collaboration with various mental health organizations, offers workshops and webinars aimed at educating young remote workers about the risks of burnout and providing coping mechanisms. These resources focus on time management, mental health resilience, and strategies for avoiding overwork

- Youth-focused organizations, such as **Jóvenes Emprendedores de España** (Youth Entrepreneurs of Spain), have begun to address the unique challenges of remote work for younger populations, including burnout. These organizations often offer guidance and mentorship to youth starting their own businesses or working in remote positions, helping them understand how to navigate the mental health challenges that come with remote work.

These initiatives emphasize the importance of setting healthy boundaries, taking regular breaks, and creating supportive work environments, whether in-person or virtual

- In response to the growing concern about burnout in remote work environments, several universities in Spain have introduced programs to support students working remotely, including part-time jobs or internships. The Universidad de Barcelona and Universidad Autónoma de Madrid offer counseling services tailored to the needs of remote workers, providing students with tools to manage stress, prevent burnout, and establish a healthy work-life balance. These services are often complemented by workshops on time management and digital detox practices

While Spain has made considerable progress in promoting mental well-being among remote workers, there is still room for improvement. Experts emphasize the need for more structured policies, accessible mental health resources, and targeted support programs specifically designed for young professionals working in digital environments.

3. Needs analysis

In Spain, the needs analysis was carried out through a combination of pre-meeting surveys and an online group discussion during the roundtable. Participants were recruited via invitations sent to a pre-selected list of individuals—including project managers, team leaders, and employees from organizations operating in hybrid or remote work settings—as well as through a publicly shared invitation on social media.

A diverse demographic was targeted, ranging from young professionals to more experienced managers and HR, ensuring representation across various groups, work experiences, and job roles. The participants primarily consisted of project managers and team leaders from a variety of sectors, with a particular focus on those working in project management roles.

A total of 10 participants attended the event, including:
• Seven youth participants working remotely and/or in hybrid mode
• Three stakeholders (an employer with remote work team, an NGO representative,

and an HR)

The discussion took place in a virtual meeting held on 18 March 2025 via Zoom. The meeting lasted approximately 2 hours and a half and was conducted in an interactive format to engage the participants actively. The format included both a presentation and a live discussion, which provided an opportunity for participants to share their experiences and insights.

The roundtable discussion began with a brief presentation, providing key information about burnout, including its definition, symptoms (physical, emotional, and behavioral), and stress factors that can exacerbate burnout. The presentation also emphasized the specific impact of burnout on project managers, focusing on stressors such as tight deadlines, high responsibilities, and team management in hybrid or remote environments. After the presentation, a facilitated discussion was held, where participants were encouraged to share their personal experiences and challenges related to burnout.

The needs analysis combined both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The pre-meeting survey (which can be accessed [here](#)) gathered quantitative data on participants' perceptions of burnout, stress levels, and their work environment. The questions asked in the survey focused on key areas such as the frequency of burnout symptoms, work-life balance, and the specific stress factors that participants experienced.

During the discussion, the survey responses were used as a baseline to guide conversation and stimulate deeper reflection among the group. Mentimeter, an interactive tool, was used during the meeting to collect real-time feedback and opinions on key questions related to burnout, which were then compared with the survey data to identify patterns and gaps in the participants' understanding and experiences.

The combination of these approaches allowed for a comprehensive needs analysis, providing valuable insights into the challenges faced by project managers and other employees working in high-pressure hybrid and smart working environments.

3.1. Results

Experience with mental health struggles in remote work

In the roundtable discussion, many participants shared experiences of burnout symptoms, particularly close to important work deadlines, where they experienced difficulties with concentration, headaches, muscle tension, digestive problems, sleep disorders, and social disengagement. These challenges were often amplified by the remote work setup, with symptoms such as anxiety, fatigue, and exhaustion being prevalent. The struggle of balancing personal and professional life while working remotely was also a common theme, leading to emotional exhaustion. Survey responses corroborated these experiences, with participants acknowledging that the isolation, excessive workloads, lack of recognition and lack of direct interaction with colleagues in remote work environments exacerbated their mental health challenges. As a results, participants experienced also sleep disorders and energy depletion, social disengagement, anxiety and constant worry.

During the discussion, it was firstly asked to the participants to give key words related to burnout's definition and it turned out that the most common words associated with it are anxiety, exhaustion, alienation, fatigue and tiredness.

After introducing the burnout's phases, a second question was asked to find out at what stage the participants identified themselves in the last year of their working life. The results were:
- Most responses in phases 3 (Frustration) and 4 (Apathy).
- Two responses for phase 1 (Initiation).
- One response for phase 2 (Stagnation).

These results reflected a high level of stress and burnout in the participants, which led to a further discussion on their needs. Further participants' interventions highlighted that the workload in remote work can vary significantly depending on specific tasks and deadlines. For this reason, effective work organization is crucial. Structuring work in a continuous and balanced way is essential to avoid reaching states of exhaustion.

The importance of planning was emphasized as well. While good organization can help reduce stress, unforeseen events may arise that, if not managed properly, can lead to advanced stages of burnout. This not only affects individual well-being but

also impacts relationships with colleagues and clients, creating a tense work environment.

Key factor contributing to burnout: a stress map

Participants were asked to construct a stress map to identify the factors that most contribute to stress in their work. This exercise allowed them to reflect on the various challenges they face in their professional environment, enabling a deeper understanding of the specific elements that lead to heightened stress levels. By pinpointing these factors, the participants were able to recognize the recurring stressors that impact their daily tasks, interactions, and overall productivity. The most significant factors contributing to burnout, as identified by participants, were:

- **Deadlines** and **difficulty of planning**, which leads to work overload and poor time management.
- **Lack of communication** and **lack of support within the team**, where employees often felt isolated and unable to address problems together increasing the workload and emotional exhaustion. Understanding that everyone faces similar challenges and having a supportive team is crucial to preventing burnout and fostering a healthier work environment. This not only strengthens the sense of teamwork but also helps to prevent isolation and reduce stress.
- **Inadequate management**, where sometimes tasks are handled inconsistently among team members, whether online or in person, due to a lack of clear structure, leading to confusion and inefficiency. Several participants also highlighted that management often does not fully grasp the extent of the workload and the daily challenges faced by remote employees.
- **Lack of recognition** for hard work, which led to feelings of being undervalued and unnoticed. The need to create spaces for dialogue with managers and HRs, where workers can express themselves and realize that they are not alone, was emphasized.

Conversely, the **least impactful factor** was related to the **physical work environment**, as most stressors were derived from organizational and personal workload issues rather than environmental conditions.

Relationship with digital tools for remote work: pros and cons

During the roundtable discussion, participants shared their varying experiences with digital tools in their work environments. Some mentioned that digital tools have become indispensable for daily operations, particularly for communication and collaboration across distributed teams. Tools like email, instant messaging apps, and project management software were often cited as essential for keeping track of tasks and maintaining productivity.

However, many participants also pointed out the challenges posed by the overwhelming number of tools available. Some felt that the integration between tools was not seamless, leading to a fragmented experience where they had to switch between different platforms for different functions. This lack of unification often created inefficiencies and made it harder to stay organized.

A common concern raised was the constant need to be available and responsive due to digital tools, which can blur the boundaries between work and personal life. Participants expressed frustration over the expectation of being always connected, which contributed to stress and burnout, especially when working remotely.

On a positive note, some participants highlighted the benefits of specific digital tools that allowed for easier collaboration, such as shared document editing platforms and virtual meeting tools. These tools helped maintain communication in teams, particularly when working across time zones, and ensured that everyone had access to the most up-to-date information.

Specifically, several tools were identified as commonly used among participants to manage their remote work:
- **Project management tools**: Trello, Asana, Monday.com.
- **Communication tools**: Zoom, Slack, Microsoft Teams, Google chat.
- **Document sharing and collaboration tools**: Google Drive, Dropbox, OneDrive.

Overall, while digital tools were recognized as vital for the modern work hybrid environment, there was consensus that more streamlined and integrated solutions would improve workflow and reduce stress. Participants emphasized the importance of proper training and support to maximize the effectiveness of these tools and to avoid digital fatigue.

Practices for better mental health in remote working environments: a burnout emergency kit

Maintaining mental well-being while working remotely has been one of the most discussed and elaborated topics during the session. Participants shared a range of practices and habits that help reduce stress and prevent burnout, providing valuable insights that can contribute to the modules on mental health. When asked to share their "burnout emergency kit," they explained the first actions they would take to alleviate stress at work:

- **Planning and prioritizing work**: setting clear goals and dividing tasks into manageable chunks, to maintain motivation and to achieve ever higher goals.
- **Maintaining a work-life balance**: setting specific work hours, creating boundaries between work and personal life, and learning to disconnect avoiding hyper-connectivity. In this sense, learning to live in the present was a key mentioned tool.
- **Self-care practices**: taking breaks outdoors, practicing mindfulness and conscious breathing, and engaging in physical activity, to recognise the importance of taking time for oneself.
- **Social interaction and communication**: building strong relationships with team members, participating in team-building activities, and sharing responsibilities.
- **Delegation**: learning to delegate tasks and prioritize to reduce work overload.
- **Time management**: learning to value time and recognize the importance of resting.

To improve mental health in remote work, participants also recommended the following:

- **Training in stress management**: offering workshops on resilience, mindfulness, and stress reduction techniques, promoting a culture of well-being, where the mental health of employees is valued.
- **Improving communication and team support**: creating spaces for open dialogue, offering team-building activities, and fostering a culture of mutual support.
- **Work-life balance support**: promoting flexible work hours, encouraging respect for personal time, and implementing clear boundaries for work and personal life.

- **Digital tools training**: offering internal training on effective use of digital tools, including project management and communication platforms, to streamline processes and reduce the time spent on administrative tasks.
- **Creating a supportive environment**: providing mental health resources and ensuring that employees feel heard and supported within the team.

Overall, the discussion underscored the importance of a combination of personal and organizational strategies to reduce burnout and improve remote work conditions. Both training and better communication are key to fostering a healthier, more balanced work environment.

4. Conclusions

Burnout is not just an individual challenge but a deeply rooted structural issue that affects workers, teams, and organizations, influencing overall productivity, engagement, and well-being. Throughout this report and the roundtable discussions, we have explored its primary causes, symptoms, and stages, shedding light on how remote work—despite its flexibility—can exacerbate stress, isolation, and blurred work-life boundaries.

While existing policies and initiatives aim to support mental well-being, significant gaps persist in addressing the unique struggles of remote employees, such as digital overload, lack of social connection, and the expectation of constant availability. To combat burnout effectively, a multi-layered approach is required— one that combines individual self-care strategies, organizational responsibility in fostering a healthy work environment, and systemic policy improvements that safeguard employees' mental health.

Moving forward, cultivating a sustainable remote work culture will demand not only structural changes but also a collective shift in mindset, where well-being is prioritized alongside productivity. Achieving this requires continuous adaptation, proactive leadership, and a shared commitment from all stakeholders to create a healthier, more resilient workforce.