Adapting Mental Health Needs Analysis and Action Planning to Online & Hybrid Methods: Lessons Learned During COVID-19

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efpa European Federation of Psychologists' Associations

ENWHP

- 5.4% EU workers 2019 worked from home (Eurostat, 2022)
- Post pandemic - 31% EU worker prefer to work from home several times a **week** &16% prefer to work from home daily (Ahrendt et al., 2021)
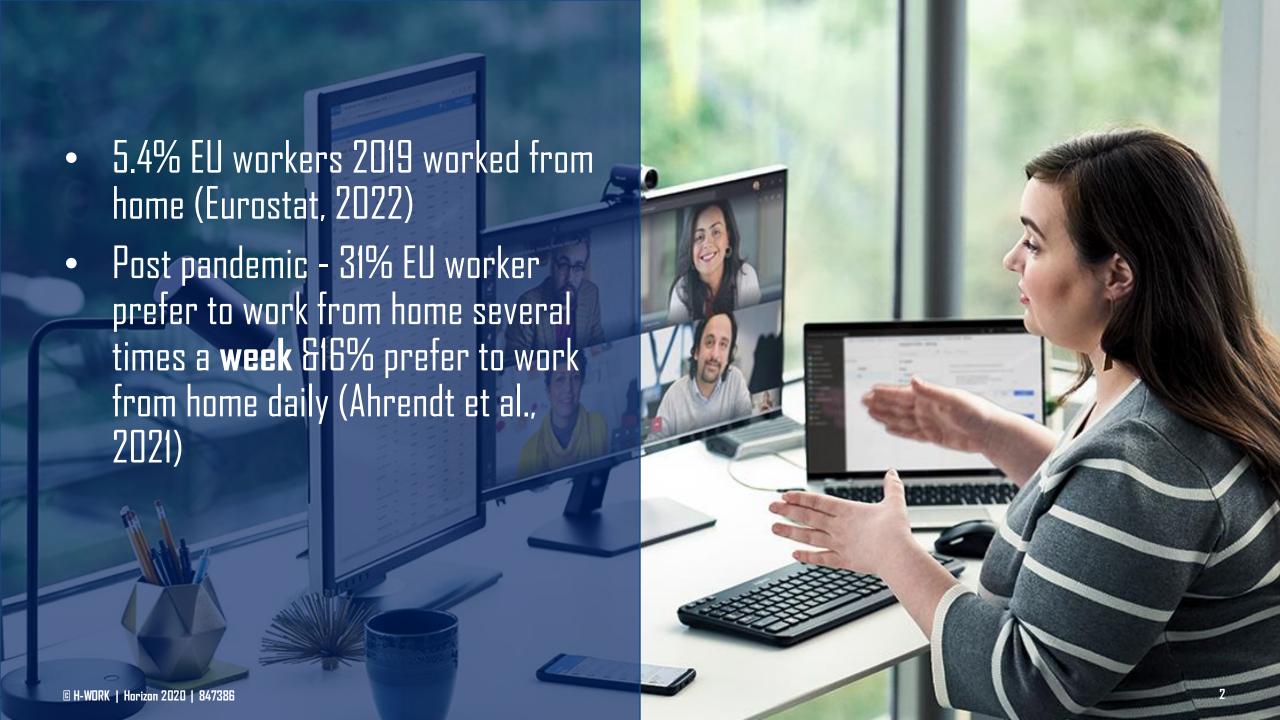
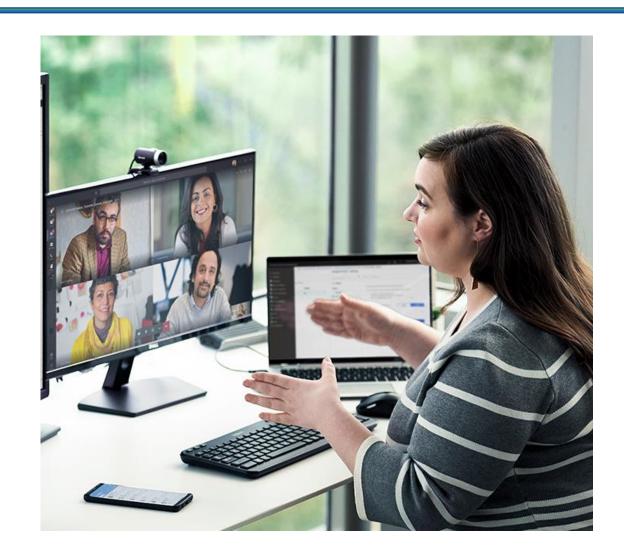# Background -Mental Health Needs Analysis

- **Needs assessment tools** should ensure <u>active engagement</u> and <u>participation</u> to align the intervention with the **organizational context** (von Thiele Schwartz et al., 2021).

- This level of understanding requires **richer data gathering methods** (such as interviews, focus groups and group-based workshops).
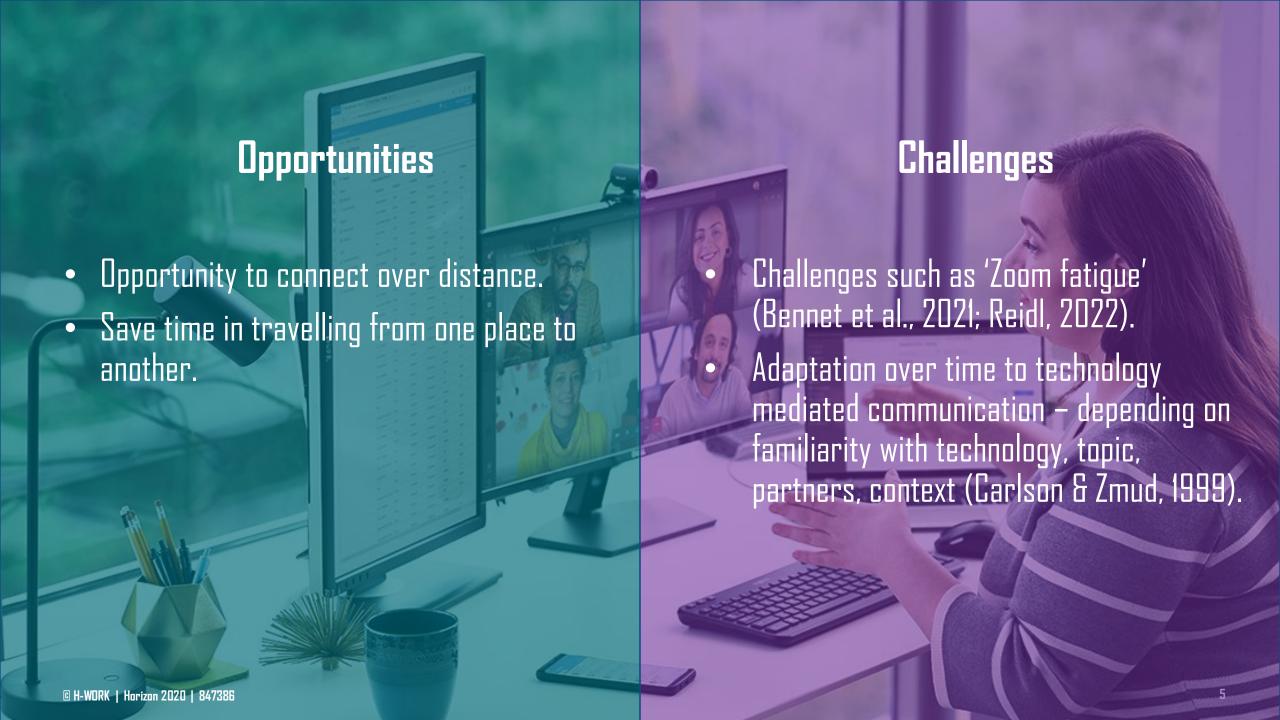
Technology Mediated Communication

- Different capacities to transmit rich information (Daft & Lengel, 1986)

- Richer channels (e.g., face to face) more suitable for tasks that involve non-routine and ambiguous communication or conveying emotion.

- Video calls considered relatively rich, but not as rich as in-person.

Opportunities

- Opportunity to connect over distance.
- Save time in travelling from one place to another.

Challenges

- Challenges such as 'Zoom fatigue' (Bennet et al., 2021; Reidl, 2022).
- Adaptation over time to technology mediated communication – depending on familiarity with technology, topic, partners, context (Carlson & Zmud, 1999).

Research questions

- What are the main opportunities and challenges associated with conducting mental health needs analysis and action planning via online and hybrid methods?

- How do the opportunities and challenges identified inform adaptations?

Research Context & Methods

Need analysis

- Needs Analysis conducted in 5 public organisations and 4 SMEs across 5 EU countries.

- Needs analysis methods included: dyadic activities (interviews with managers) and group activities (employee focus groups, stakeholder meetings) – moved online due to Covid-19

Participants

- Data for this paper = Focus group Interviews conducted with interventionists

- Group 1 - December 2020 and January 2021

- Group 2 - October 2021

Analysis

- Analysis using Nvivo 12– Qualitative template analysis (King 2004).

Key findings

Opportunities

- Time/Effort efficiency gains

- Increased openness

Challenges

- Relationship/Rapport building;

- Non-verbal & Emotional Cues;

- Knowledge/Information exchange;

- Cognitive Load;

- Technical Difficulties

- **Hybrid methods even more challenging (particularly for cognitive load)**

Key findings

Adaptations were mostly focused on minimising challenges.

- To reduce cognitive load and problems of information exchange during sessions,
- To reduce loss of non-verbal cues,

Adaptations that enhanced opportunities were retained longer term.

- Organisation wide online kick-off meeting – brought efficiency gains as well as enhancing information dissemination especially in large organisations
- Online dyadic interviews – brought efficiency and openness gains

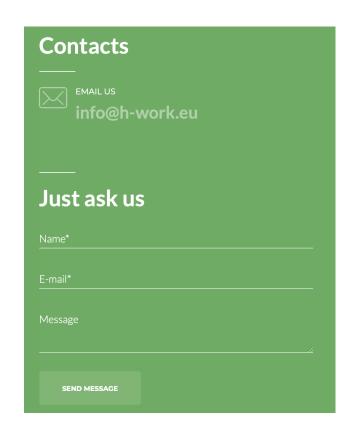- **Online & hybrid methods** brought many **challenges** – particularly for **group activities**.

  - **Adaptations** could **relieve** these to a certain extent but **F2F preferred**.

- However, **opportunities were also revealed** which led to some **long term adaptations** – retained even after Covid-19 restrictions lifted.

- **Theoretical implications** for technology adaptation literature.

  - **Adaptation** success related to focus on **enhancing opportunities**.

  - **Context** may also determine **longevity of adaptations** (e.g., large, complex orgs).

- Practical implications for future practice.

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