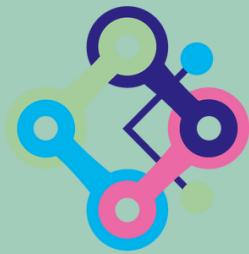


LOCAL AND REGIONAL TIME AGENDA

Topic 5

TOWARDS A
MORE
RATIONAL AND
SUSTAINABLE
WORKING TIME



Local and Regional Time Network

The **Local and Regional Time Agenda (LRTA)** is a pioneering compilation of time policies implemented by local and regional authorities around the world. It provides an updated compendium of time policies grouped by topic and practical recommendations on how to implement them.

The Agenda is coordinated by the **Local and Regional Time Network**, the international alliance of cities, metropolises, and regions aimed at promoting the right to time where people need it most. It is the main forum to exchange and promote implementable time policies that are already changing daily life for more than 90 million people in Europe, Asia, and the Americas.

More information:

<https://timeuse.barcelona/local-and-regional-time-network/>



The **Time4All 2.0** project is a two-year initiative (2025-2026) that includes a series of exchanges and workshops in partner cities. Its main objective is to raise awareness about time policies and promote a balanced and sustainable use of daily time, engaging citizens and cities in discussions on the right to time. The project targets 1,800 participants, focusing on young people and women, who are disproportionately affected by time poverty.

Funded by the European Union through the EACEA Agency (European Education and Culture Executive Agency), Time4All 2.0 seeks to explore the value of time organisation while developing policies that enhance health, equality, productivity, sustainability, and civic participation. The project is part of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme and builds upon the achievements of its predecessor, Time4All project, implemented in 2023-2024.

The project is led by the city of Bergamo and Time Use Initiative (TUI), the international organisation promoting time policies and the right to time, which currently runs the Network's secretariat.

More information:

<https://timeuse.barcelona/time-networks/time4all-2-0/>

This project has received funds from the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.





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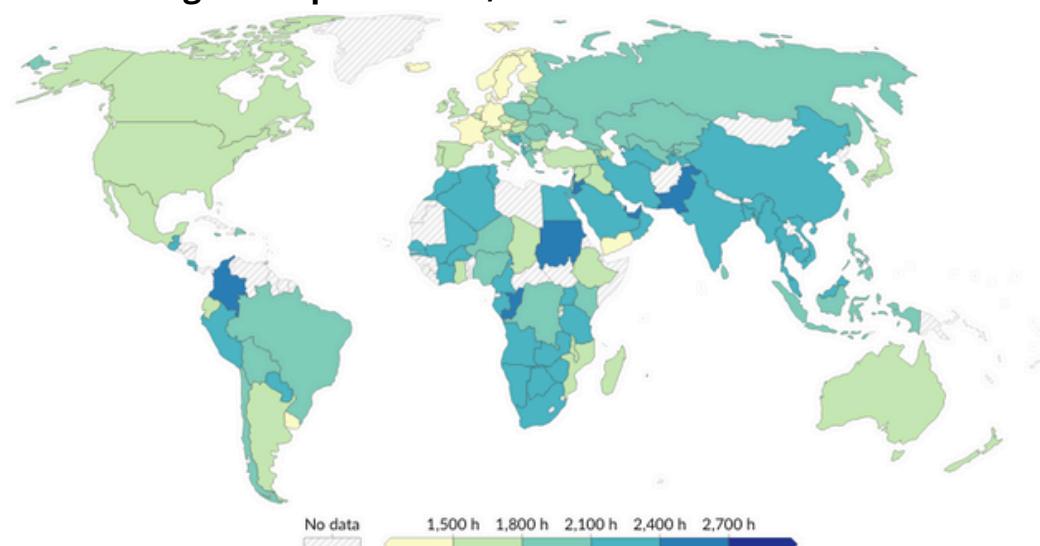
Approaching 21st Century challenges from the perspective of working time

Secretariat
Local and Regional Time Network

Time has long been a focus for social reform, from 19th-century campaigns for 8-hour days to 20th-century movements for paid holidays and parental leave. In the 21st century, there is a growing interest in how time can be organised differently, partly because of sharp inequities between the time-rich and the time-poor, prompting institutional innovation to help cities, in particular, to coordinate time more effectively. Thinking on a more rational and sustainable use of time (especially working time) is an increasingly urgent demand from society, which, more than ever, says: "I don't have time."

But the new organisation of working time needs to respond to at least three major current challenges: climate change, the need to reduce working hours, and the use of artificial intelligence. This Local and Regional Time Agenda focuses on describing existing good practices to overcome these challenges at the local and regional level, which can serve as an inspiration to the whole world. Working time plays a central role in organising daily life, with at least 8 hours dedicated to it — if not more. Depending on the region they are located in, workers work between 1.400 and 2700 hours annually, which equals 38 to 75 hours per week.

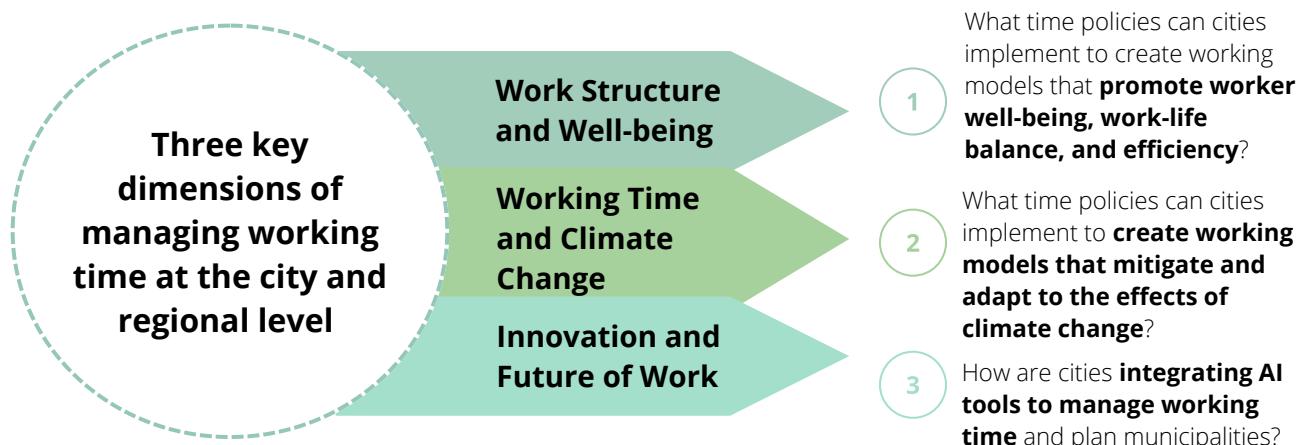
Annual working hours per worker, 2023.



Data source: Feenstra et al. - Penn World Table (2025); Huberman and Minns (2005). [Our World in Data](#)

This difference is mainly due to the national context, with working time becoming one of the main differentiating time policies a nation-state can implement. In such a context, cities, metropolises, and regions typically do not have direct competencies to change working hours. However, local and regional governments can use innovative strategies to influence working time and create more egalitarian, sustainable, efficient, and healthier societies.

As the main axis organising daily rhythms, working time has the potential to influence how workers organise their other times during the day. From commuting to having a better balance between work, family, and personal life, cities take into consideration working time to tackle different challenges arising in the 21st Century. Public institutions are frequently the main contractor, especially in local contexts, and therefore their approaches towards working time have the potential to organise quite a lot of city life. Looking outside urban dynamics, collaboration with specific stakeholders in different territories can show the path forward to overcome talent drain through its attraction and retention. Beyond socio-economic development, working time policies are proving to be useful to tackle new challenges linked to climate change.



Altogether, understanding working time from the local and regional government point of view creates the opportunity to respond to different needs posed by current societies. The Local and Regional Time Network Secretariat is delighted to present 19 working time public policies implemented at various levels of urban governance that are already changing working conditions for the better. Specifically, in the present Agenda, we explore:

- **Recommendations to implement a more rational and sustainable organisation of working time in the digital and Artificial Intelligence era.**

- **Working time policies for climate adaptation and mitigation.** In the event of other climate-disruptive events, such as heatwaves or heavy rainfalls, local and regional governments can use working time to create safer environments for their workers. Including innovation strategies in the urban planning of working time can also build momentum for integrating technology, namely Artificial Intelligence, to visualise how citizens use urban spaces and move around the territory. Showcased policies from the cities of **Seoul** (pp. 17-20), **Bansko** (pp. 21-23) and **Milan** (pp. 27-29) are a good example of this.
- **Working time policies for well-being.** Local and regional governments are usually the main stakeholders in defining directly or indirectly the working conditions in specific contexts. Rationalising how workers balance their working life with family or personal needs creates the ingredients for improving well-being. This can be done by rethinking the public provision of services for companies and workers, as demonstrated by the cases of **Sant Boi de Llobregat** (pp. 35-37) and **Barcelona** (pp. 59-62). Alternatively, public institutions can frame their working conditions as an example towards the whole society by leading with innovative solutions in new working time structures. Such is the example of the city of **Strasbourg** (pp. 38-39).
- **Work-related time policies in rural areas.** Frequently, time policies are only conceived in metropolitan or urban dimensions, but they can also be a force for change in rural territories. By looking after the specific needs of workers in the ruralities, integrating innovative approaches to the diversity of working needs, talent attraction and retention can be promoted, and workers are able to stay in their territories. The case of the **Inter-District Consortium for Promotion of Socioeconomic Initiatives** (pp. 71-73) shows the path forward in this case.

The showcased policies are complemented by expert insights from **Tatiana Pignon** and **Alexandra Arntsen**, from the **European Working Time Network** (pp. 8-11), and those of **Marta Junqué Surià** and **Nadia García Ruiz** (pp. 12-15), from the Time Use Initiative. Together, they offer a preface to understand the varying dimensions of how to conceive public policies that create a more rational and sustainable working time.

The Secretariat extends its gratitude to all the experts, institutions, and department personnel involved in making this publication a reality. The Network is defined by its different local and regional governments, but, more importantly, by the committed people working towards a healthier, more egalitarian, sustainable and efficient time.



Marta Junqué Surià, Ariadna Güell Sans and **Marc Martorell Escofet** are part of the Local and Regional Time Network Secretariat.

WORKING TIME TENDENCIES ACROSS EUROPE

Advancing local economies through working time reduction

Tatiana Pignon

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Autonomy Institute

Alexandra Arntsen

Board of Directors and the Coordination Team
for the **European Work-Time Network**

A number of pilot programmes and policies involving working time reduction with no loss in pay are flourishing all over Europe, aiming to reap the benefits in dimensions such as social wellbeing, economic productivity, ecological sustainability and gender equality. A striking trend is that local governments are taking a leading role in this movement. While national legislation often moves slowly, local and regional authorities are emerging as key innovators, piloting shorter working weeks even in countries where central governments remain cautious or resistant.

In **Portugal**, the Regional Government of the Azores is preparing a six-month pilot in public administration, reducing hours from 35 to 32 per week. This initiative stands out not only as the first of its kind in Portugal but also for its participatory approach, as employees will help redesign workflows to improve productivity and citizen services.

Similarly, in the **United Kingdom**, local governments have taken bold steps despite the absence of national mandates. South Cambridgeshire District Council, for example, made its four-day week permanent after a successful trial that improved service delivery and cut recruitment costs. Similarly, Scotland's public sector pilot demonstrated significant gains in wellbeing and productivity, reinforcing the case for broader adoption.

Elsewhere, **Spain's** Asturias region is exploring pilot programs even as national efforts to legislate a 37.5-hour work week face political roadblocks. In **Norway**, a surgical ward at Østfold Hospital tested a 90% work schedule for full pay, reporting positive outcomes for staff and patients alike. In France, compressed hours models (35 hours over four days, with no reduction in pay or service) have been successful in several municipalities, such as Lyon or Strasbourg.

What makes these initiatives remarkable is that they occur in contexts with very different competencies and traditions of labour regulation. These examples show that local actors are not waiting for top-down reforms — they are experimenting with mo-

models that fit their operational realities. Local governments are leveraging their autonomy to respond to workforce challenges, improve wellbeing, and modernise public services. Work-time reduction initiatives contribute to this agenda by raising productivity and efficiency, advancing more sustainable lifestyles, and promoting social justice. It has become a strategy that can be mobilised by local and regional governments to deal with a range of place-based issues.

Key drivers

Trade unions have historically been the driving force behind reductions in working hours. The eight-hour day was won through decades of union-led strikes and campaigns in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries — and in many countries, changes like the five-day week and paid holidays were achieved through sectoral bargaining and coordinated industrial action before they became law. **Today, trade unions remain instrumental in driving work-time reduction across Europe, both at the national and at the local level:** the Scottish Government's reduction of the working week from 37 to 35 hours, for example, as well as its 32-hour pilot, was won as a result of a long-standing campaign by the PCS union. But unions are no longer the only ones advocating for WTR.

A key new factor in recent years is that local governments are increasingly approaching work-time reduction from an employer's perspective. Interest in WTR from employers increased rapidly in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic, in light of renewed conversations about work-life balance, wellbeing at work, and mental health. Across Europe, hundreds of employers have already introduced forms of work-time reduction with no loss in pay in an effort to improve working conditions, address work-related stress and sickness, and strengthen their ability to recruit and retain staff. Similarly, many local governments now see the possibility for work-time reduction as a strategic investment in people and performance. In competitive labour markets, offering a four-day work week or reduced hours has become a powerful tool to attract talent and reduce turnover, even when salaries cannot compete with the private sector. This was the main reason behind **South Cambridgeshire's** successful experiment with the four-day work week, or **French municipalities'** efforts to provide a better work-life balance to their staff.

Notably, some local governments are using work-time reduction as a strategic policy to address place-based issues and support wider local development. Another example — perhaps the most ambitious to date — was the city of **Valencia's** experiment with a month-long four-day week in April-May 2023, intended to examine

the impacts it would have on the people, the environment, and the economy. The study's results — covering 360,000 residents — were overwhelmingly positive, from improved wellbeing, reduced stress and more socialising to improved air quality and a dynamised local economy, particularly in the hospitality and leisure sectors.

The potential of working time reduction for local economies

Though locally-run working time reduction initiatives are still in the early stages, their potential to advance local economies and communities is considerable. Pilots in Europe and beyond show that shorter working weeks can boost productivity by encouraging employees to work more efficiently and focus on high-value tasks. More importantly, they reveal substantial well-being improvements — including reduced stress, lower absenteeism, and better mental health — which translate into fewer sick days and higher engagement at work, but also more time for care work, better quality relationships, less conflict, and more social engagement outside of work. Individual improvements yield wider benefits for families and communities, and support local economies by freeing up more time for hobbies, personal interests, and social activities. WTR can enable a more equitable distribution of care work between men and women: data show that men on shorter working hour schedules assume more responsibilities at home. Livelier, happier communities also support more dynamic local economies. There are suggestions that work-time reduction, especially in the format of a four-day workweek, could have positive effects for local tourism: the experiment in Valencia showed increased spending in the service industry and improved employment rates.

A striking feature of the work-time reduction movement is its reach across vastly different political, economic, and institutional landscapes. The fact that an increasing number of local governments, with different levels of autonomy and different political interests, are pioneering such initiatives shows just how transformative the policy can be. In a world of polycrisis, working time reduction is one of the most promising policy avenues available to local authorities — strengthening economic resilience while enabling social justice and environmental sustainability — with the potential to yield transformative benefits to people, the environment, and the economy alike.

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Alexandra Arntsen is a Senior Lecturer in Economics at Nottingham Trent University, UK. She holds a PhD in Economics from Birmingham City University. Her research interests are centred on the relationship between working hours and sustainability. In addition to her interest in work-time reduction, she researches the intersection between decolonisation and decarbonisation. Alexandra sits on the Board of Directors and the Coordination Team for the European Work-Time Network, which coordinates progressive work-time efforts of academics, trade unions, political parties, and civil society actors across Europe.

RECOMENDATIONS FOR A MORE RATIONAL AND SUSTAINABLE WORKING TIME IN THE AGE OF DIGITISATION AND AI

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Director of the
Time Use Initiative

Nadia García Ruiz
Policy Consultant at the
Time Use Initiative

The relentless pace of modern life, often amplified by technological connectivity, has pushed us into what some experts term the “culture of speed.” This acceleration generates exhaustion and discomfort, making the concept of time poverty a structural reality for vast swathes of the global population. While the symptoms of time poverty —like the anxiety of “not being able to keep up”— are felt individually, the roots are a collective, political problem.

Those engaged in paid employment, especially women who shoulder the double burden of market labour and domestic duties, are disproportionately affected. The urgent task for governments and institutions is not merely to cope with the digital future, but to actively re-engineer our organisation of time, particularly the sphere of paid work. This involves using digitisation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) as tools for rationality and sustainability, and unfolds a core question: it is not about whether AI can save us time, but rather with what intention it is being deployed. To date, many innovation processes remain overwhelmingly oriented towards economic efficiency and control, often overlooking the profound potential of digital tools to actually reduce time poverty and foster well-being.

The 11th Edition of the Time Use Week (Barcelona, 2025), titled *The Right to Time in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*, underscored a fundamental conclusion: **technology can contribute to a more balanced use of time only if the technological revolution is accompanied by a revolution in the organisation of time.** To integrate such dimension, we can see eight recommendations:

- 1 Put time poverty at the centre
- 2 Give intentionality to AI
- 3 Regulate AI beyond efficiency
- 4 Protect the human core of work
- 5 Strengthen collective bargaining on digital time
- 6 Integrate time use in digital urban planning
- 7 Promote digital diets and slow time
- 8 Build governance for the right to time

8 recommendations on how to ensure the right to time in the AI era in local and regional governments

1. Put time poverty at the centre

Governments should recognise time distress and time poverty as key social challenges and integrate them into labour, social and digital policies. Barcelona, for instance, has created a cross-cutting “right to time” agenda, using time-use surveys and indicators to guide policies on work-life balance, mobility and public services, while **Bolzano** has used its Time Office to evaluate local actions with specific time-use metrics.

2. Give intentionality to AI: Use AI to reduce unwanted work hours

AI deployment should be linked to a gradual reduction of excessive working hours and to better daily and weekly rest, rather than to layoffs or work intensification. Several European and North American cities (eg. **London, Valencia, Portugal**) have supported pilots of the four-day working week, where AI tools help maintain productivity while reducing weekly hours, as seen in firms connected to innovation ecosystems in Toronto and other metropolitan areas.

3. Regulate AI beyond efficiency

Public regulation must ensure that AI in workplaces is evaluated not only for efficiency but also for its social, time and equality impacts. Cities in the European Union are beginning to apply new AI rules locally, focusing on fundamental-rights impacts when deploying algorithmic systems that affect workers, and **Barcelona**’s digital policies already include ethical criteria and impact assessments for algorithmic tools in public services. **Bansko** policies allow the use of technology to adjust working time schedules during heatwaves.

4. Protect the human core of work

Governments should promote AI systems that take over repetitive, low-value tasks so that people can dedicate more time to creative, relational and democratic dimensions of work. Communication and creative agencies in cities like **Toronto** use AI to automate routine tasks so staff can devote more time to creative, strategic work, and **São Paulo's** (pp. 45-46) data-driven smart projects are designed to free professionals from repetitive processes in order to improve direct work with citizens.

5. Strengthen collective bargaining on digital time

Collective bargaining and social dialogue need a renewed mandate to negotiate algorithmic management, the right to disconnect and time boundaries in hybrid and platform work. In many European metropolitan areas, social partners are opening negotiations on the right to disconnect and digital surveillance. One of the best examples already implemented is the **Labour Relations Council of Catalonia** (pp. 43-44), which has a working group in which business and union organisations agree on time policies recommendations for all citizens and companies.

6. Integrate time use in digital urban planning

AI and tools such as digital twins should include time-use data to redesign mobility, public services and urban rhythms in favour of shorter commutes and better synchronisation of daily life. Istanbul has used AI to optimise transport flows and reduce commuting times, while cities like **Seoul** (pp. 17-20), **Amsterdam, Istanbul and Milan** (pp. 27-29) deploy AI- or digital-based mobility management to smooth traffic, cut emissions and support shorter, more predictable daily journeys.

7. Promote digital diets and slow time

Governments can use education, public campaigns and workplace norms to foster healthier digital habits that avoid permanent connectivity and techno-stress. Both **Barcelona's City Council** (pp. 59-62) and **Barcelona Metropolitan Area** (pp. 53-56) time policies include campaigns and guidelines to limit techno-stress and normalise disconnection outside working hours and to promote a more rational working time organisation.

8. Build governance for the right to time

Public institutions at all levels should adopt time policies as a permanent field of governance and link AI strategies explicitly to the right to time. The **Local and Regional TIME Network** is a unique and successful world network, which creates lasting structures and networks that help municipalities and regions to work for the right to time in the digital era.

Ultimately, whether we will have more or less free time in the future does not depend on the technology itself, but on the collective decisions we make as a society regarding its deployment. The contemporary culture of acceleration, intensified by digitalisation, demands that we consciously reclaim slowness, rest, and the quality of time.

To guarantee the right to time and social well-being in the digital era, we must pursue a deep cultural transformation centred on the human rhythm. This is not about doing things faster, but about doing them better —more sustainably, more equitably and in a more rational way towards workers and people.

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Part 1

WORKING TIME POLICIES FOR CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION

S-MAP (SEOUL 3D DIGITAL TWIN PLATFORM)

S-Map is a comprehensive 3D digital twin platform that replicates the entire city of Seoul in a virtual environment. It integrates real-time data from IoT sensors, AI analytics, and environmental monitoring to simulate city functions, optimise urban management, and support time-oriented policies such as mobility flows and safety monitoring.



POLICY OBJECTIVE

The main objective of the S-Map is to create an accurate 3D replica of Seoul, providing a foundation for time-optimised urban management.

- **Digital City Replica:** 600,000 buildings have been precisely modelled in 3D, and it has mapped citywide terrain with 12 cm precision orthoimagery. It included high-precision DEM/DSM with 1m×1m grid spacing, and high-precision 3D modelling of the Han River area.
- **Infrastructure Layers:** It foresaw 6 types of underground facilities (water/sewage, gas, electric, telecom, heating), converting 2D to 3D visualization. S-Map uses 605 Internet of Things (IoT) fire safety sensors in public buildings and subway stations for interior mapping.
- **Real-Time Integration:** IoT sensor network provides live environmental data, integrating CCTV cameras for construction site monitoring and AI and machine learning to enhance digital twin intelligence. By integrating it with cloud technology, the digital twin application has been accelerated.
- **Time-Based Applications:** By creating building approval simulations, administrative review time is reduced, and real estate development decision-making is accelerated. Construction monitoring allows for the minimisation of project delays, and the real-time safety analysis enables rapid emergency response



CONTEXT

In cities, time is the invisible layer shaping how we live and work. It dictates when traffic flows, when buildings breathe, and when people rest. Seoul's S-Map Digital Twin Platform seeks to change this — by translating the city's rhythms into data we

can see, measure, and redesign. When cities can visualise where and how time is spent — in traffic, at work, under heat, or in safety — they can redistribute it more fairly.

POLICY DESCRIPTION

Launched in 2021, S-Map replicates the entire city of Seoul in an interactive 3D environment. It integrates real-time data from IoT sensors, AI-driven analytics, and environmental monitoring to simulate how the city functions through time.

S-Map's precision mapping and simulation technologies support efficient urban planning and administrative decision-making processes:

- **Mapping Mobility and Work:** Through High-Definition (HD) road mapping, S-Map provides precise, lane-level 3D data that underpins new mobility models. This helps policymakers design working-time strategies that reduce congestion peaks and shorten travel times, turning what was once lost time into quality time.
- **Safety as a Foundation of Time Equity:** S-Map's AI-based Crime Vulnerability Analysis visualises risk areas in 3D, guiding patrol routes and CCTV placements. This ensures safer conditions and optimised working hours for field workers, reinforcing time equity and workplace dignity.
- **Citizens as Co-creators of Time:** Through the S-Map Open Lab, citizens and students design spatial solutions using Seoul's 3D data. Their projects — mapping safety, mobility, and welfare — make time management a shared civic responsibility.
- **A New Urban Contract:** When cities can visualise where and how time is spent — in traffic, at work, under heat, or in safety — they can redistribute it more fairly. Seoul's experience suggests that the future of sustainable working time will be modelled in digital space.



KEY ASPECTS

S-Map's has been deployed since 2021, when it created a basic 3D replica with 600,000 buildings and 6 types of underground facilities. In 2022-2023, the Internet of Things (IoT) was integrated with 605 fire safety sensors and real-time monitoring. In 2024, AI analytics were included with 61,654-grid crime analysis and real estate simulations, and in 2025, indoor mapping with LiDAR for traditional markets and HD

road mapping were also added.

S-Map has transformed how urban time is managed and distributed.

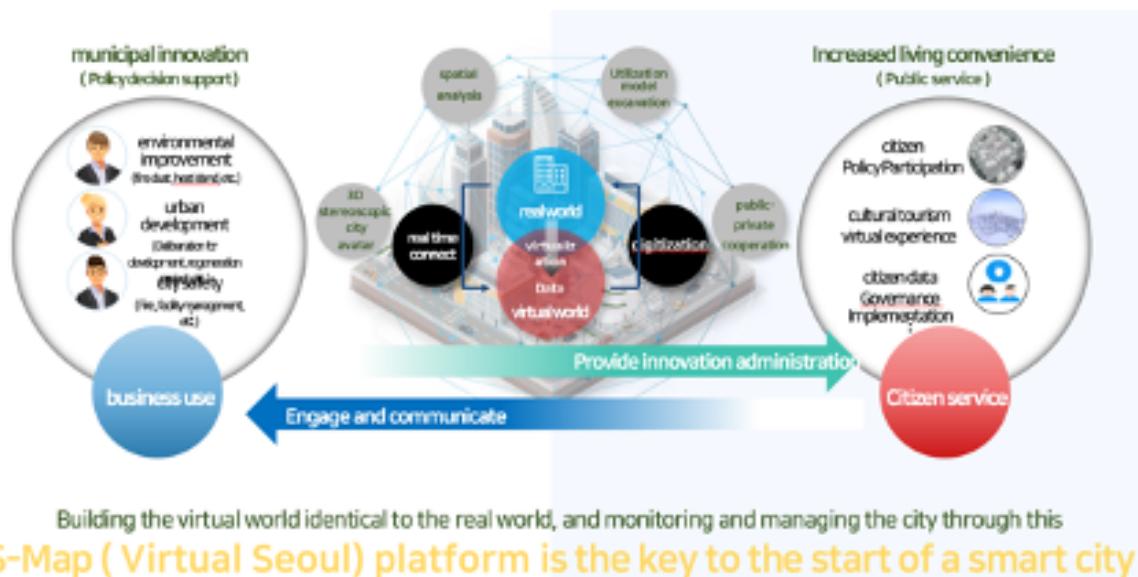
- **Administrative Time:** Building height simulation allows processing faster permits and approvals, and construction site CCTV cameras create the opportunity for real-time oversight. Real estate simulations automatically detect violations, shortening review cycles
- **Safety Time:** 61,654 grid cells were deployed for precise vulnerability analysis, which allows for a CCTV placement optimisation and patrol route recommendations. Monthly analysis of 24 indicators allows for evidence-based decisions.
- **Traffic Time:** HD road mapping offers support for autonomous vehicles, and the inclusion of Mobile Mapping System (MMS) technology provides lane-level precision data
- **Citizen Time:** Open Lab projects with 53 submissions in 2024 allowed for citizen-created solutions in domains such as safety, mobility, and welfare.

S-map allowed for exploring a cultural dimension with cultural heritage modelling, reconstructing the 2000-year history of Seoul in a virtual space, allowing citizens to explore the city's evolution through time with culturally accurate 3D models of historic sites. It also provided educational resources and tourism content.

✓ RESULTS

- **Comprehensive Indicators and 3D Risk Visualisation:** 24 safety indicators analysed monthly, including CCTV coverage, sex offender, residence density, and population flow patterns. Five-level risk classification (1-5 grade, from "very good" to "very vulnerable") is visualised through 3D mapping for intuitive understanding. This has been successfully deployed with Gwanak Police Station and District Office (6 departments), protecting time equity for field workers and residents.
- **Digital Construction Management:** Construction process tracking with digital twin technology reduced project timelines by up to 15% through early identification of potential delays.
- **Time Impact Assessment:** Analysis of construction impacts on citizen time, helping planners minimise disruptions to traffic flow, business operations, and residential access.

- Citizen Participation: In 2024, 53 teams participated in the spatial information utilization competition, focusing on safety (23%), transportation (21%), welfare (21%), and environmental solutions (21%). In 2025, 47 teams joined: 16 general teams, 2 graduate teams, 22 undergraduate teams, and 7 high school teams developing spatial solutions for urban challenges. Winning proposals include crowd density risk maps, flood preparedness planning, crime vulnerability visualisation, and other urban safety solutions created by citizens.



Promoting institution
Seoul Metropolitan Government



Jin Dong Suk
Senior Manager
Spatial Information Division



WORKING TIME STRUCTURE

Temporary measures allowing earlier start and finish times during heatwaves.
Outdoor workers are provided with additional breaks, shade, and drinking water.



POLICY OBJECTIVE

- Adaptation of working hours during heatwaves: ensuring the health and safety of employees through earlier shifts, additional breaks, and access to water.
- Integration with sustainable urban strategies: expanding green areas, planting trees, creating shaded and “cool zones”, and improving energy efficiency in public buildings.
- Strengthening community resilience: developing policies that combine climate adaptation, social inclusion, and sustainable urban planning.



CONTEXT

Before introducing these policies, the Bansko Municipality, as a mountain region, had rarely faced the challenge of extreme heat. However, in recent years, rising summer temperatures and recurring heatwaves have started to affect both residents and municipal employees.

The main problems identified were:

- Increased health risks for outdoor workers during peak heat hours.
- Lack of preparedness of public spaces and buildings to provide sufficient cooling and shade.
- Growing pressure on urban infrastructure and green areas due to climate-related stress.

The policy was therefore needed to ensure safe working conditions, strengthen social inclusion, and improve urban resilience in the face of climate change.



POLICY DESCRIPTION

Adjustments in working hours are part of a wider strategy, including expanding green areas, planting trees for natural shade, maintaining parks, and creating “cool zones” in public spaces. The municipality also supports energy efficiency and cooling solutions in public buildings such as schools and kindergartens.

The policy has been developed through a set of coordinated activities aimed at adapting working conditions to extreme heat and enhancing the resilience of the municipality.

Main activities:

- Adjustment of working hours: Earlier start and finish times during heatwaves; additional breaks and provision of water for outdoor staff.
- Cooling and shading measures: Creation of “cool zones” in public spaces, planting of trees, and expansion of green areas to provide natural shade.
- Mobility improvements: Better public transport connections to reduce travel time during extreme weather conditions.



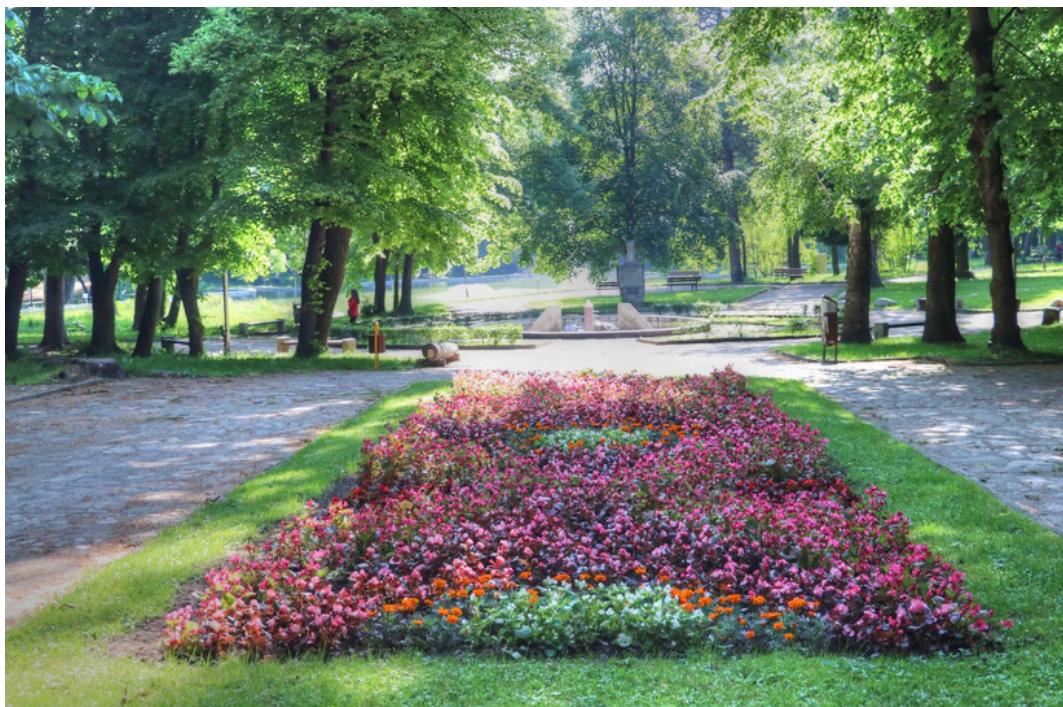
KEY ASPECTS

- Stakeholder engagement: Cooperation with local employers, community organisations, and residents is essential to ensure flexible work arrangements and adherence to guidelines.
- Data-driven approach: Monitoring temperature trends and gathering feedback from employees and residents allows the municipality to adjust schedules and public measures dynamically.
- Infrastructure and green spaces: Investment in green infrastructure, shaded areas, and energy-efficient building retrofits is critical for long-term resilience.
- Innovative elements: Integration of climate adaptation into municipal work schedules is a relatively new approach in mountain municipalities. Combining flexible working hours with urban cooling strategies (green spaces, shaded “cool zones”) ensures both health protection and environmental sustainability. Linking social inclusion with climate resilience highlights a holistic and forward-looking approach to public policy.



✓ RESULTS

- Approximately 120 municipal employees have benefited from adjusted working hours and heat-adaptive schedules during the summer months.
- Over 5,000 residents indirectly benefit from improved public spaces, shaded areas, and green infrastructure.
- Flexible schedules and remote work options have positively impacted women with caregiving responsibilities and communities with long commuting times, improving work-life balance.



Promoting institution
Municipality of Bansko



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ADJUSTMENT OF WORKING HOURS DURING HEAT WAVES

Municipal policy that promotes the adjustment of construction work schedules during heatwave alerts.



POLICY OBJECTIVE

- Promote a production model focused on the well-being, health and safety of workers.
- Reduce the exposure of workers to the risk of illnesses caused by high temperatures.
- Promote safe working conditions from an occupational risk prevention perspective.
- Guarantee the continuity and efficiency of services or works during heat emergency episodes.
- Foster a preventive culture based on the planning of working hours according to weather conditions and an occupational health approach.
- Strengthen the entity's adaptive capacity in the face of climate change, integrating specific operational measures in specific activity sectors.



CONTEXT

Due to the sustained rise in temperatures and the increasing frequency of heatwave episodes resulting from climate change, the city of Barcelona faces a situation that demands adaptive measures across all areas of urban and labour activity. In recent years, there has been a clear trend of more days with high temperatures, a greater frequency of heatwaves, and a slight extension of their duration — factors that exacerbate impacts on health and certain economic activities. Studies on temperature trends in Barcelona also indicate an expected increase in average temperatures between 1.7 °C and 4.5 °C by the end of the century.

Excessive and sustained heat leads to health problems and an increased mortality rate. This affects especially the elderly, infants, and people with chronic pathologies, but also those groups working outdoors and are more exposed to solar radiation and heat. Such a phenomenon, intensified by the urban heat island effect, high population density, and social vulnerability, possesses specific risks for outdoor wor-



kers, such as those in construction and infrastructure maintenance. In this context, the Barcelona City Council approved, through the Mayoral Decree of July 2024, a specific measure authorising the adjustment of construction work hours whenever Spain's Meteorological Agency or the competent body activates the local action plan for a heatwave in the warning or emergency phase.

This measure reflects the institutional commitment of the Barcelona City Council to address the challenges of the climate emergency, a commitment reaffirmed with the government measure presented in November 2025: the Climate Plan. This is an umbrella plan that sets out the city's roadmap for mitigating the causes of climate change and adapting to its effects, structured around six specific action plans: "Let's Change for Climate" Plan, Heat Plan, Mobility Plan, Resilience Plan, Neighbourhood Climate Plan, and Energy Transition Plan.

POLICY DESCRIPTION

Barcelona City Council, through the Mayor's Decree of July 2024 (S1/D/2024-00383), establishes an exceptional measure to adjust construction working hours during heatwave episodes, to reduce worker exposure to peak temperatures and guarantee their health and safety.

The measure is activated when the Spanish Meteorological Agency (AEMET) or the competent authority declares a heatwave warning or emergency under the relevant action plan. In such cases, the working day may be permitted to start earlier, at 07:00 a.m., and its completion extended until 9:00 p.m., provided that machinery use and noisy work are limited to the range between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., as stipulated in Barcelona's Environmental Ordinance. Exceptions may apply in cases of serious, complex, or urgent work. The decree also recommends placing site cabins in shaded or protected areas whenever possible to reduce direct sun exposure for workers.

This temporary adjustment aims to avoid the hottest central hours of the day while maintaining neighbourhood rest periods and minimising acoustic impact in the urban environment. Through this regulation, the City Council acts preventively and in a coordinated way to address rising temperatures and the growing recurrence of heatwaves, ensuring that construction activity continues safely.



KEY ASPECTS

- Conditional application to official warnings: The measure applies only when state or regional authorities activate a heatwave action plan in a warning or emergency phase, restricting its use to exceptional climatic events.
- Temporary schedule extension: During such episodes, construction work is exceptionally permitted between 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m., provided that machinery use and noisy work occur only between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., as established by Barcelona's Environmental Ordinance.
- Holistic approach: The measure is part of a broader strategy for prevention and occupational well-being, taking into account all working conditions during extreme heat episodes.
- Consistency with existing regulations: The measure is based on Royal Decree-Law 4/2023 (May 11), which mandates the adaptation of working conditions during adverse weather phenomena, including extreme temperatures, and Article 44-6 of Barcelona's Environmental Ordinance, which regulates working and machinery operating hours.



RESULTS

All construction workers doing their work within the Barcelona city limits are affected by this measure, when applied in case of heatwaves.

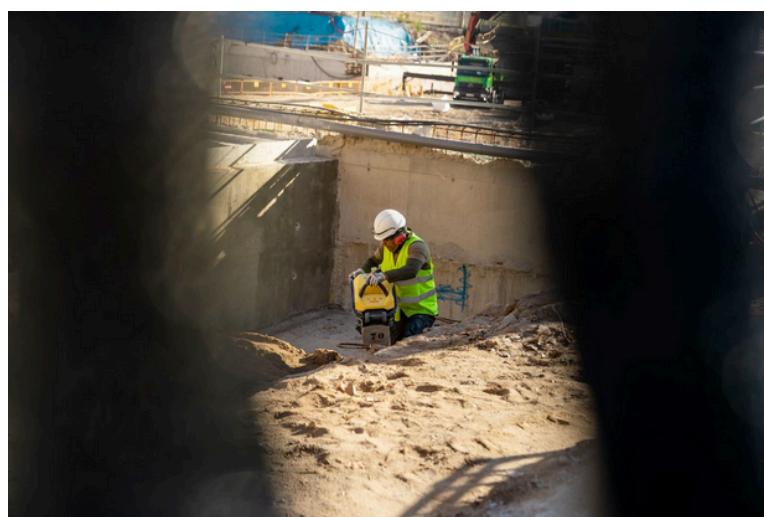


Photo credit: Lucas Amillano - Imatges Barcelona

Promoting institution
Ajuntament de Barcelona



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MILAN LIVING LAB (FOR A SMARTER 90-91 CIRCLE LINE)

Innovative, time-saving solutions for local transport within the city.



POLICY OBJECTIVE

The Milan Living Lab Project is based on the introduction of innovative and data-driven smart urban mobility solutions, providing users with smarter options for the use of public transport on a crucial and much-used city route. It experiments with CAVs (Connected and Autonomous Vehicles), ADAS (Advanced Driver Assistance Systems) and autonomous vehicles for the transport of passengers or goods.

Its main focus is on providing a new travel experience on the 90-91 circle line by:

- Making public transport more efficient and faster.
- Allowing users to choose how and when they want to travel.
- Saving travel time and personal time.
- Providing information through digital tools.
- Allowing for real-time awareness of traffic conditions.
- Collecting crucial data on traffic in specific locations.
- Providing project developers with data for further development.
- Experimenting automatic mobility solutions.
- Making public transport more sustainable



CONTEXT

Despite recent limitations on private vehicle access within a wide restricted zone, Milan, which is at its centre a historic city with rather narrow streets, still suffers from significant motor traffic, and surface public transport is at times slowed down. This is particularly true of the ring road that circles the entire centre and intersects all the main roads to the city, along with their corresponding public transport stops and important hubs.

Two electric trolleybus lines travel the complete ring road: number 90 in a clockwise direction, and number 91 in an anticlockwise direction. These trolleybuses are often



very crowded and busy, and cater in significant part for working-class and immigrant residents, who need to reach different parts of the city to their jobs or other businesses.

Time, as ever, is a precious resource, and a lot of it can be spent waiting for the next bus, which may be very crowded already, or slowed down by traffic. Some parts of the ring road are busier than others. Milan Living Lab is an attempt to improve travel conditions with sustainable solutions by focusing on a critical segment of the 90-91 route.

POLICY DESCRIPTION

Milan Living Lab focuses on solving mobility issues and providing safe and performing public transport service through innovation. The project includes various steps:

- All traffic lights within a specific tract of the 90-91 route (between Piazza Piola and Piazzale Lugano) have been fitted with smart sensors, providing real-time data on local traffic and on road conditions. This includes tracts with reserved circulation and tracts with mixed circulation.
- Data are sent to a control centre, which analyses them and sends back digital information in real time.
- The control centre provides 90-91 buses with advanced information on the state of the road before them, including suggestions on whether they should accelerate or decelerate in view of the state of the next traffic light.
- A specific app informs users of the exact position of the bus within the route and the remaining time to the bus stop.
- Sensors installed on the buses inform users through the same app of the number of available seats on each arriving bus, including seats for individuals with special needs.
- Users may look for customised information on how congested bus stops are and of traffic conditions in general, optimising their waiting times and their transport choices.
- Traffic data analysis allows for the optimal understanding of traffic patterns and for the rescheduling of bus service for better sustainability.
- Data are open to developers who may design further services and applications.



KEY ASPECTS

- Milan Living Lab is an attempt at solving urban mobility problems through innovation.
- The info-mobility app developed for the project has already been tested with a limited number of users, receiving very positive feedback.
- The same infrastructure will be used to develop automated mobility services.
- Further segments of the 90-91 circle line will be converted to this standard until completion.



RESULTS

- 5G network coverage of the whole test area.

The project has set up the necessary technological infrastructure in:

- 27 road intersections.
- 23 traffic light nodes.
- 5 bus stops (a further 25 are planned within the next year).
- 70 sensors for digital video analysis.
- 30 new trolleybuses fitted with the necessary sensors.



Promoting institution

Milan City Hall
Mobility Division

The project is financed by the European Union – Next Generation EU - National Recovery and Resilience Plan – Mission 1 - Component 1 - Measure 1.4.6. "Mobility As A Service For Italy" – CUP B49G22000970006.



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PEAK HOUR MANAGEMENT IN LINE A OF THE METRO IN RENNES

Rennes Metropole has managed to smooth out morning congestion on its metro line A, and improve the metro service and the students quality of life (2009-2013).



POLICY OBJECTIVE

- Based on time and mobility diagnostics, characterise the structure(s) that have the greatest impact and generate the most traffic in the “hyperpeaks” (or rush hour) observed on line B.
- Characterise peak schedules and identify collective targets.
- Take measures to change behaviour in the medium term.
- Improve accessibility, quality of life for metro users, and the attractiveness of Rennes.
- Contribute to the efficiency of public transport, which also meets an environmental challenge by reducing the proportion of car use.



CONTEXT

- 2009 in line A: the metro platform was packed during the “rush hour pick” phenomenon, which happens in Rennes between 7:40 and 8:00 a.m.
- Technical solutions were tested: the frequency of service was increased, new trains were purchased, trains were reconfigured to increase the number of carried passengers...
- These initial solutions increased transport capacity by 30%, but proved insufficient in the face of the constant increase in metro ridership.



POLICY DESCRIPTION

For a period of 4 years (2009-2013): 3 stakeholders —the Time Office, in conjunction with the Mobility and Transport Department of Rennes City & Metropolis, as well as Keolis, the metro operator— worked together to develop a partnership methodology on the following basis:ed.

- The time office first carried out a time diagnosis to identify the “time generators”, stakeholders whose schedules generate large flows of traffic at specific times. The Office used ticketing data, counts, field observations...

- A consultation process on the Villejean-Université metro station was initiated with those time generators affected by the hyperpeak: the University of Rennes, major secondary schools, and the nearby hospital centre. The metro station provided services for all of them.
- The aim was to show the stakeholders their participation in a “schedule system” and the impact of their individual schedule decisions on the rhythm and accessibility of the whole area. University catering service, student mutual societies and student representatives were involved in the consultation process.
- In 2012, a pilot test was launched with partial staggered classes and a two-wave start to the new academic year: 6.000 students in the 3rd year of Bachelor's and in Master's Degree started at 8:15 a.m., while 8.000 students in the 1st and 2nd year of Bachelor's Degree started at 8:30 a.m.
- Singing of a Charter: all partners undertook the compromise to inform each other of any changes to their schedules that may affect the whole area.
- It's working! Right from the start of the experiment, the hyperpeak was smoothed out, and both the metro service and the students' quality of improved.



KEY ASPECTS

- The strength of this approach lies in the fact that collective interests are taken into account in a decision that is usually based on individual choices.
- It was based on the consultation with all stakeholders (University, lycées, Region Bretagne, Education Nationale, student bodies...).
- It relied on experimentation as a way of trying, adjusting and correcting the policy.



RESULTS

The figures for this project are:

- A 17% reduction in the average train load between the most congested stations.
- 5% reduction in metro flows at morning peak times.
- 30 million € saved, and staggered investment in infrastructure (Kennedy station from 2025 on).



Photo credit: Julien Mignot - Rennes Ville et Métropole



Hélène Réveillard

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Promoting institution

Rennes Métropole

Université de Rennes

Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Rennes

Lycées Coëtlogon et Victor & Hélène Basch

Keolis Rennes



SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY FOR MUNICIPAL STAFF

Promotion of the use of sustainable vehicles (bicycles and electric scooters) by Terrassa City Council staff to reduce the environmental impact of work-related mobility.



POLICY OBJECTIVE

- To reduce emissions derived from the internal displacements of municipal staff.
- Promote active and sustainable mobility habits within the administration.
- Optimize shared mobility resources managed by the City Council.
- Improve efficiency in travel between municipal services.
- To be a reference for other local institutions and actors.



CONTEXT

Terrassa is a large city with multiple municipalities spread throughout the territory. Traditionally, travel between facilities was done in motorized vehicles. The need to reduce emissions and promote sustainable mobility within the organization will drive the adoption of alternative means, such as bicycles and electric scooters, by municipal staff.



POLICY DESCRIPTION

The policy includes:

- The provision of bicycles for shared use between departments, managed by the Heritage Service.
- The incorporation of electric scooters in departments such as Environment.
- The realisation of training courses on safety and the correct use of the vehicles.
- The progressive integration of these means in the ordinary activity of services that require mobility (Culture, Environment, etc.).



KEY ASPECTS

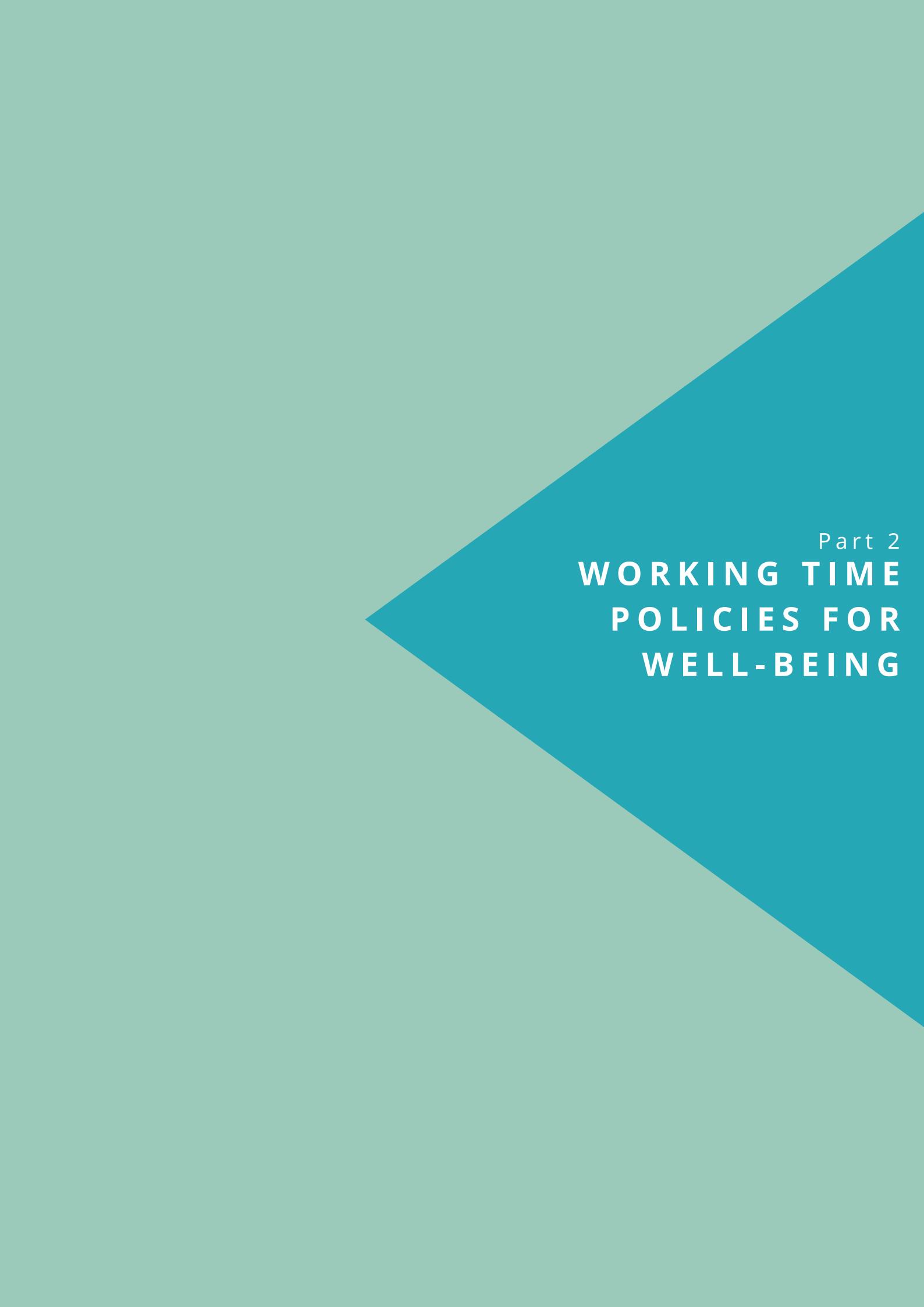
- Logistical coordination between departments for the maintenance and availability of vehicles.
- Specific training to ensure safe and appropriate use of the skates.
- Requires an organizational culture favorable to innovation and sustainability.
- Adapts to specific needs: e.g., use by the Culture Department during major festivals.
- Flexible and transversal use among different municipal services.



RESULTS

- Reduction of the use of motorized vehicles in internal displacements.
- Improved agility and efficiency of personnel in services that require frequent mobility.
- Positive acceptance by employees who have used the vehicles.
- Growing interest of other services to incorporate sustainable means of mobility.





Part 2

**WORKING TIME
POLICIES FOR
WELL-BEING**



DIAGNOSIS FOR THE CREATION OF THE CONCILIACCIÓ NETWORK

ConciliAcció is a public-private network project designed to foster corporate policies that seek work-life balance and time equilibrium. Its aim is to improve labour inclusion, promote business efficiency, and position work-life balance as a key engine for attracting and retaining talent.



POLICY OBJECTIVE

Analyse the current state of work-life balance in businesses, companies, and organisations in and identify good practices for a better time organisation in working time. The diagnosis also aimed at identifying tendencies and demands in Sant Boi's territorial context to promote equality and a better balance between work, personal, and family life within companies and organisations.



CONTEXT

In Sant Boi de Llobregat, work-life balance determines the dynamics of job supply and demand, conditioning the capacity of organisations to maintain a stable workforce and their business efficiency. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are particularly affected, often lacking the knowledge or resources to implement flexible measures. A traditional business culture based on presenteeism still prevails in the region, where 30% of workers have a working day extending until 7 pm.

The policy addresses the need to modernise this culture, adapt to the demands of new generations for better time use, and solve the discordance between the conditions offered by companies and the scheduling expectations of workers .



POLICY DESCRIPTION

The ConciliAcció project was conceptualised in 2024 as a public-private network aimed at fostering business policies that seek work-life and general time balance. The intention was to improve labour inclusion, promote company efficiency, and position work-life balance as a key driver for attracting and retaining talent.



Through the creation of the pioneering tool, "ConciliAcció 360", it is possible to evaluate the territory's organisations according to their level of maturity in work-life balance practices and compare them by sector, scope, size, and age and gender distribution. In this way, it is possible to guide the provision of specific services from the City Council that integrates Economic Promotion, Employment, and Equality to strengthen the municipality's productive fabric through work-life balance.



KEY ASPECTS

- The "ConciliAcció 360" Tool: A self-diagnosis mechanism with 20 questions across 5 thematic areas: objective data, predictability, flexibility, co-responsibility, and digitisation/well-being. Aimed at providing information to companies and organisations on their level of maturity with work-life balance measures.
- Comparative Analysis: The tool allows companies to compare their maturity level against others in the same sector, size, or demographic distribution, fostering a competitive yet collaborative environment for improvement. Data is anonymised to guarantee confidentiality among companies.
- Adaptability: The policy recognises that work-life balance measures must be adaptable to specific organisational contexts rather than relying solely on legal standardisation.



RESULTS

The diagnosis phase has successfully analysed the current state of work-life balance in Sant Boi organisations.

- Pilot Validation: The "ConciliAcció 360" tool was validated through interviews and testing with local companies from different sectors, such as logistics, pharmaceutics, retail, and restaurants.
- Findings: The diagnosis revealed that while there are leading companies, the average level of work-life balance is below optimal, with specific gaps identified in "flexibility and autonomy" and "digitisation and well-being".
- Output: The project has generated individualised reports for companies and laid the groundwork for a future certification system to recognise best practices.

The project emphasises that work-life balance is no longer just a legal requirement or a cost, but a strategic investment that yields tangible benefits in productivity (estimated at a 12% increase) and reduction of absenteeism.

«ConciliAcció»



Promoting institution

Ajuntament de Sant Boi de Llobregat —
Department of Employment, Equality
and Time Reform
Diputació de Barcelona



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THE 4-DAY WEEK — LA SEMAINE EN 4 JOURS

A major working time reform implemented on 1st January 2024, offering eligible municipal staff the possibility of working 35 hours over four longer days (without compensatory rest days), to improve work-life balance and quality of life at work.



POLICY OBJECTIVE

- To propose an innovative work model that meets staff's new expectations while maintaining the quality of public service.
- To allow experimentation on a population with the widest possible variety of professions, particularly those not eligible for remote work.
- To offer part-time staff the possibility of returning to full-time work and receiving their full remuneration without losing the benefit of their weekly rest day.
- To improve the quality of life at work and the work-life balance.



CONTEXT

The policy was initiated to respond to new staff expectations regarding work organisation. It starts from the foundation of a high workload and seeks to use the new model as a form of recognition for particularly committed staff, helping to prevent burnout.



POLICY DESCRIPTION

The 4-day work week is one of four new work cycles offered to eligible staff as part of a major working time reform implemented on 1st January 2024.

- Formula: 35 hours per week over 4 days (with no compensatory leave).
- Daily Work: The day is longer than 8 hours and 45 minutes, with one fixed rest day.
- Management: The scheme is based on trust, responsibility of staff, motivation, and collective intelligence. It is used as a management tool to recognise staff and prevent professional exhaustion.



KEY ASPECTS

- Targeting Diverse Roles: The experiment was deliberately opened to varied roles, including those that are not eligible for remote working (a key innovation).
- Reconciling Part-Time & Full-Time: The system allows part-time employees (10 participants) to return to full-time work, regaining full pay while retaining a weekly rest day—a significant benefit.
- Conditions for Success: Participants commonly share a high workload, autonomy in work organisation, and manager trust/recognition.
- Efficiency: The 4-day week, often coupled with remote work, leads to better efficiency and requires more rigour in organisation, ultimately generating less stress despite the longer working days.
- Organisational Impact: Managers note limited impacts on planning and a stronger sense of responsibility among teams, leading to a search for work time optimisation (e.g., reducing meeting times).



RESULTS

- Participation: 60 volunteer staff out of 4,100 eligible staff (2% of staff on variable hours).
- Staff Profile: The largest participating group is executive staff (Category A: 44%), followed by Category C (32%). 58% are from the administrative sector.
- Well-being (Unanimous): Staff report feeling less tired, especially when the free day is next to a weekend (3-day rest). There is a double effect of relief on family life and health.
- Free Day Use: The free day is highly valued, mainly used for oneself and family, facilitating the spreading of personal logistics over three days instead of two. Wednesday is notably chosen more by women, potentially linked to childcare.
- Service Quality: Staff have a clear sense that the quality of public service is maintained at their level.
- Health: Occupational medicine recorded positive feedback from staff.
- Financial Impact: Participants who returned to full-time work experienced an increase in purchasing power.

Promoting institution

City and Eurometropolis of Strasbourg

**Béatrice Soldati**

Officer for Working Time and Telework
Human Resource Direction



FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF BOLZANO

Since the early 2000s, the Municipality of Bolzano has experimented with flexibility and different working hours and working solutions.



POLICY OBJECTIVE

The main objective is to foster a healthier balance between professional and personal life, as well as increasing efficiency by offering employees the opportunity to work in an environment where they feel more motivated to do so.



CONTEXT

Since the early 2000s, the Municipality of Bolzano has experimented with flexibility and different working hours tailored to employees' needs. During the years, solutions such as home office, smart working and extended flexibility during the summer period have been introduced within the administration to encourage a better work-life balance for our employees. On top of that, the monthly work distribution is an employee choice.

In the past years, the needs of workers themselves have changed. Many people, especially after the pandemic, have decided to devote more time to activities other than work (sports, friendships, leisure activities, and family). Reflecting this change in mindset, making public administration more flexible and appealing to job seekers is clearly a step in the right direction. At the same time, for the past five years, the city has undergone several structural changes and, consequently, the constant opening of new construction sites. This, combined with the strong tourist appeal that Bolzano is achieving, as well as the large influx of workers arriving from other neighbouring cities or even from outside the region, has led to a significant increase in traffic. This translates into greater stress for workers who need to commute to their place of work.

The combination of all these factors led the city to decide to take a further step and consult with some of the city's spokespersons: trade representatives, service managers, different entities, etc. There was an agreement reached on



the need for change in the city. As the municipality is the main authority in the city, it was decided to take the first step by reorganising its working hours in a way that would benefit both city employees and the broader city.



POLICY DESCRIPTION

Starting in January 2025, the city administration implemented a new best practice aimed at improving flexibility and work-life balance for employees. The project focuses on extending flexible working hours and providing more options for organising the working day, based on individual needs.

The first change concerns entry times: whereas previously employees could start their day at 7:30 a.m. onwards, the new arrangement allows them to begin as early as 7:00 a.m. This offers an advantage to those who prefer working early hours or who wish to avoid commuting during peak traffic times, especially school-related traffic congestion. Employees can now freely choose their starting time between 7:00 and 9:00 a.m. in agreement with their office director or service manager, to ensure continuity of service.

The second change expands the possibility for full-time employees (38 hrs./week) of working half a day and finishing at lunchtime. Initially offered only on Fridays, this option is now extended to Mondays and Wednesdays as well. This means employees can occasionally schedule some free afternoons during the week, allowing them to dedicate more time to family, personal commitments, education, sports, or leisure activities. It also supports commuters who may avoid traffic, especially between 5 and 7 p.m., when most companies finish their workday.

The overall objective of the initiative is to provide employees with greater autonomy in managing their time. Balancing this with the need to maintain uninterrupted public services has been the most challenging part so far. At the end of the year, the project will be evaluated to identify possible adjustments in this direction.



KEY ASPECTS

When planning a big change within an administration, a try-and-fail approach is a good starting point. This project idea is the result of a successful 2-year trial conducted during summer seasons, when longer daylight hours encouraged employees to have an earlier start in the morning and the heat was too intense to work until late in the afternoons. The positive outcome of the trial led to the decision to make this option permanent throughout the year.

The policy is still a “work in progress”, and by the end of the year, different scenarios will be discussed to ensure a higher flexibility to access the workplace while guaranteeing citizens access to public services. On another level, the city is working on defining whether changes in opening and finishing hours of services and offices. Citizen habits have changed as well, so the entire framework needs evaluation.



RESULTS

The change of the working hours was planned for administrative employees working in offices/services with limited citizen contact and access. Approximately 215 employees were assigned the newly planned standard full-time working hours, with Monday and Wednesday afternoons' flexibility addition. Another 150 with a previous agreement already managing afternoons' flexibility were included in the agreement to guarantee the morning flexibility as well. For all other employees, there is the possibility to request it directly with their superior (office director, service manager, etc.) to determine whether the working hours variation is compatible with their role and responsibilities.

In the first 8 months, 35 employees requested to be included in the agreement. In addition, 19 new hires have been assigned to one of the new time schedules. A more in-depth analysis of the results will be conducted before the end of the year to evaluate the project and make some adjustments.

Nuovi orari di lavoro
2025



LABOUR RELATIONS COUNCIL GUIDELINES TO ENSURE THE RIGHT TO DIGITAL DISCONNECTION

Reference document prepared by the Labour Relations Council of Catalonia (Consell de Relacions Laborals de Catalunya), offering guidelines and best practices for companies and organisations to ensure the right to digital disconnection, with the aim of preserving rest time, health, and work-life balance for employees.



POLICY OBJECTIVE

- Guarantee the right to digital disconnection for all employees, including managerial staff.
- Ensure respect for rest periods, leave, and holidays, as well as personal and family privacy.
- Prevent psychosocial risks linked to hyperconnectivity and digital fatigue.
- Provide companies and organisations with a practical and consensus-based guide for developing internal digital disconnection policies.



CONTEXT

The digitalisation and expansion of remote work have blurred the boundaries between working time and personal time, increasing the risk of overload and digital fatigue. In response to this challenge, the Labour Relations Council (CRL), as a social dialogue body, reached a consensus on the need for specific guidelines to regulate and guarantee the right to digital disconnection in Catalonia.



POLICY DESCRIPTION

The document establishes a common framework for companies and organisations. It includes:

- A procedure for developing a digital disconnection policy, with participation from both unions and employers.
- Scope of application and modalities for exercising the right.

- Specific measures to limit communications outside working hours, regulate meetings, and foresee justified exceptions.
- Training and awareness-raising actions for staff.
- Mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the policy.

The aim is to provide a practical guide that organizations can adapt to their context and sector, helping to consolidate a healthier and more equitable time culture.



KEY ASPECTS

- Document developed and agreed upon within the framework of social dialogue, with institutional, union, and employer participation.
- Includes concrete examples and best practices (email scheduling, notification systems, protocols for urgent communications).
- Linked to SDGs 5, 8, and 10 (gender equality, decent work, and reduction of inequalities).
- A transferable and applicable tool for other regions and institutions.
- The document is available in both Spanish and English versions.



RESULTS

- Publication of the Guidelines in October 2023 as a reference document at the Catalonia level.
- Dissemination among business organisations, trade unions, and public administration.
- Consolidation of the Labour Relations Council as a stable framework for dialogue on working time.
- Participation in the Summer School of Time within the "Time, Health and Habits" space, where these Guidelines were presented.

Promoting institution

Consell de Relacions Laborals de Catalunya (CRL) – a social dialogue body integrated by the Catalan Government, the two major trade unions, CCOO, UGT, and the two major business organisations, Foment del Treball and PIMEC.



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TÔ LEGAL

A smart electronic system that simplifies and expedites the authorisation process for individuals providing informal services in public spaces, acting as a gateway to the formal economy.



POLICY OBJECTIVE

To simplify obtaining permits for street vendors, foster entrepreneurship, and transition informal workers into the formal economy while enhancing transparency and location monitoring.



CONTEXT

São Paulo, with a population exceeding 12 million, is a central hub for job seekers, with many working in the informal sector. Obtaining permits traditionally required at least seven days, visits to municipal offices, and extensive paperwork, which was a barrier to legal work.

This system creates a pathway for those unable to enter the formal job market to work legally.



POLICY DESCRIPTION

By recognising informality, Tô Legal fosters entrepreneurship and encourages many informal sector workers to transition into the formal economy gradually. It does this by making it easier for informal vendors to apply for permits and use them flexibly. Additionally, Tô Legal enhances transparency, improves efficiency, uses geographic information systems (GIS) for location monitoring, and reduces corruption through better payment control.

Tô Legal was designed as a gateway for individuals who need to work legally but may lack the qualifications, education, or experience necessary for formal employment. This smart electronic system, utilised by the city of São Paulo, enables citizens currently working illegally and insecurely on the streets to formalise their activities over time.



The system enables users to apply for permits, select appropriate streets for vending, find information about other vendors in the area and their offerings, update their registrations, and pay municipal fees online. Civil servants can easily access information about permits and authorisations, streamlining inspection procedures and significantly enhancing transparency and accountability.



KEY ASPECTS

- Speed: Reduces bureaucracy significantly.
- Inclusion: Designed for those lacking qualifications for formal employment.
- Technology: Uses GIS and online payment systems to reduce corruption.



RESULTS

- Time Savings: The permit process was reduced from 7 days to just 1 hour online.
- Transitional Support: Successfully enables citizens working insecurely to formalise their activities.



Acknowledgements:

This good practice was identified with the cooperation Nicholas You, Executive Director of Guangzhou Institute for Urban Innovation and originally published in the *Use cases of people-centered "CitiVerse"* report.

Promoting institution

City of São Paulo
SP Negócios



Pedro Rebelo

Executive Director of International Business



COWORKING “LA CIBA”

A shared workspace and economic initiative incubation service located within La CIBA, a public resource centre for women, innovation, and feminist economics. Its mission is to boost the economic empowerment and autonomy of women in the municipality and surrounding areas by improving their professional competencies and fostering their leadership in economic and/or business initiatives.



POLICY OBJECTIVE

- To enhance the personal autonomy of the city's women and develop real and effective equality.
- To combat gender inequalities, including male violence, by creating genuine employment opportunities.
- To provide tools for establishing the green economy, fostering a space for sharing, innovating, and creating a site of empowerment and social transformation.
- To improve the professional competencies and employability of women in a context of real and effective equality.
- To attract women-led projects and contribute to eliminating the gender gap by promoting female talent and leadership.



CONTEXT

La CIBA opened in 2020 as a comprehensive and holistic resource centre for women, innovation, and feminist economics, quickly becoming a reference on the topic. Initially, it focused on resources for women's personal autonomy across the life cycle.

The Coworking space is part of the second phase, expanding the centre's 8,000 m² focus to include boosting economic empowerment and autonomy, and recognising the importance of business leadership in achieving real equality. The project directly addresses the local strategic plan for economic promotion, which aims to encourage entrepreneurial vocations and promote the social and solidarity economy.



POLICY DESCRIPTION

The Coworking space was created within La CIBA as a shared workspace whose mission is to drive the economic empowerment and autonomy of women from the municipality and surrounding areas by improving their professional skills and through the leadership of economic and/or business initiatives. This economic initiative incubation service is positioned between municipal gender equality policies (La CIBA) and economic promotion policies (Grameimpuls), making the cross-cutting nature of these two services a new, more innovative and synergistic public co-management model.

The Coworking accommodates all individuals or legal entities with a business, entrepreneurial project, or other initiatives that promote employment and add value to the municipality. Unlike other workspaces, the Coworking incorporates a feminist and equitable approach, making it highly important that prospective entrepreneurial projects have a gender perspective and align with the values promoted by La CIBA. La CIBA strives to ensure the Coworking is an inclusive, safe, and accessible physical space for all individuals.

Taking into account the care burdens that women typically bear, other support services are offered, such as the Menuda Ciba service, a free childcare service, workshops, talks, and training on topics such as female leadership, feminist economics, care, prevention of male violence, and networks for entrepreneurial women.



KEY ASPECTS

- Transversal Governance: An innovative co-management model between Equality (La CIBA) and Economic Promotion (Grameimpuls) that embeds gender equality into local economic development.
- Care-Supportive Infrastructure: Provides the free "Menuda Ciba" care service to directly address and alleviate care responsibilities that impede women's professional development.
- Feminist Selection Criterion: Emphasis is placed on projects demonstrating a gender perspective to ensure alignment with the Coworking's core mission and values.
- Community Building: Fosters a supportive environment to combat the isolation of professionals and build a collaborative network among members.



- Focus on Key Sectors: Intensive work is carried out in priority local sectors, including health, food/catering, and creative industries.

✓ RESULTS

The Coworking space is set to become:

- A reference point in feminist economics and a leader in the gender-focused entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- A node for hosting and providing technical assistance for women's economic projects and projects focused on gender equality or social innovation.
- An effective means to facilitate the creation, start-up, consolidation, and growth of new women-led businesses, favouring job creation and diversifying the local economy.



Promoting institution

Department of Internal Services, Economy, Equality, and Trade
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REORGANISATION OF CLEANING AGENTS' WORKING HOURS

The City of Rennes promotes working time flexibility during the day to adapt work schedules of cleaning agents, whose staff is mostly composed by women.



POLICY OBJECTIVE

The planned organisation is designed to improve working conditions and enable staff to balance their professional, personal and family lives, and to promote recognition of this undervalued profession. At the same time, the aim is to guarantee the efficiency and quality of the service. Therefore, the idea of setting up a day shift and not a nocturnal one, when infrastructures are occupied, is rapidly gaining ground.

- The first objective is to give employees access to a permanent, full-time job.
- The second objective is to enhance the value of the job, which translates into access to ongoing training and the possibility of a career development plan.

All these elements contribute to professional equality. They also have an impact on motivation and the quality of the service provided.



CONTEXT

In 2004, the City of Rennes considered the future of the maintenance business, which was experiencing recurring difficulties. The question then arose as to whether it would create an in-house service or call in an external service provider. The challenge was an ambitious one: to improve the working conditions of the staff, to offer a service that combined efficiency and ethics, to turn this undervalued profession into a real one, and to carry out an exemplary operation.

The staff, most of whom are women, often work less than full-time, alternating between office maintenance (47 sites) and lunchtime shifts in the school catering services, working split shifts and finishing their day at 8:15 p.m. This harms personal and family life. There are recurring problems: a high absenteeism rate of 25-30%, high staff turnover and poor staff integration.

The first solution was chosen, and over a period of eighteen months, a team of three people went out to meet staff and department heads, consult expert groups, and test out a different organisation.

 **POLICY DESCRIPTION**

A project manager visited the 47 concerned sites, drew up a descriptive sheet for each, and met the cleaning staff individually. The approach was very much appreciated by the staff, who felt that they had been "recognised." Such interviews also helped to identify the difficulties and expectations of the staff. Heads of department were also consulted when the work schedules were being drawn up, which made it possible to address the inevitable questions relating to the presence of cleaning staff during working hours.

The new organisation was first tested at one site, then at six, before being extended to all sites in 2004.

- When drawing up the schedules, all the constraints had to be taken into account: distances between sites, accessibility of infrastructures —some, such as libraries, can only be cleaned when the public is not present—, office occupancy rates...
- Depending on the site, there are two possible shifts: 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. or 10:45 a.m. to 6:45 pm, including a one-hour lunch break. Most of the 45 staff work full-time or part-time (39 staff).
- Working in pairs helps break down isolation and provides security in the workplace. What's more, it ensures that there is a minimum service if one of the operatives is absent.
- The direct contact between the maintenance staff and the administrative staff means that the work schedule can be adjusted from time to time.
- The chosen organisation leaves a great deal to the autonomy and initiative of the staff.

**KEY ASPECTS**

- Limited financial resources to achieve the planned objectives.
- An innovation in terms of time for agents that will lead to greater equality and smoother mobility.

**RESULTS**

The new organisation is satisfactory in terms of objectives and expectations.

- Absenteeism has fallen by 45%.

- Productivity has increased by 15%, from 154 m²/h in 2003 to 180 m²/h in 2007.
- User satisfaction rate is almost 80%, reaching up to 90% for sensitive areas (sanitary facilities). The cleaning staff appreciates this new organisation, which puts an end to an invisible and anonymous function. They have their place within the departments in which they work, and feel recognised by the municipal administration.
- The City of Rennes has thus achieved its objective of setting an example and demonstrated that another approach to cleaning jobs is possible.
- Private cleaning companies, faced with difficulties in recruiting and retaining their employees, as well as a number of large contractors, are interested in Rennes' approach to combining social ethics and efficiency in the fast-growing cleaning sector.



Photo credit: Didier Gouray - Rennes Ville et Métropole

Promoting institutions

City of Rennes (Human Resources Department and the Time Office)

L'AUDIAR (Rennes Métropole's urban planning and development agency)

Codespar (a development committee bringing together civil society players, associations, elected representatives, businesses and trade unions)

CIDFF (Centre d'Information sur les Droits des Femmes et des Familles)

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RIGHT TO TIME: DECALOGUE AND 55 PROPOSALS FOR A BALANCED ORGANIZATION OF WORKING TIME

By placing the right to time at the centre, the policy strengthens both social cohesion and economic competitiveness in the metropolitan area.



POLICY OBJECTIVE

Policy objectives are:

- Promote work-life balance and equality of opportunities, ensuring that all workers can harmonize professional, personal, and family responsibilities.
- Encourage shared responsibility between men and women in care and domestic tasks, reducing gender inequalities in time use.
- Improve productivity and efficiency in companies by reorganizing working time through flexible schedules, objective-based work, and rationalization of long working days.
- Ensure healthier working conditions, preventing stress, time poverty, and health risks linked to irregular schedules, long hours, or night shifts.
- Support digital disconnection and responsible teleworking, fostering autonomy, reducing burnout, and safeguarding workers' mental health.
- Promote collective bargaining and participation, encouraging agreements between employers and workers to adapt time management measures to each sector and company.
- Foster innovation and training, using technology, data collection, and awareness-raising actions to improve time management practices.
- Contribute to sustainability and mobility efficiency, by reducing unnecessary commuting and encouraging more rational use of time in urban areas.
- Enhance social cohesion and economic competitiveness, positioning the metropolitan area as a model region that values time as a key resource for well-being and prosperity.



CONTEXT

In the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, working time has long been characterized by late endings, long lunch breaks, widespread unpaid overtime, and a strong culture of presenteeism. These practices have generated stress, time poverty, and difficulties in

balancing work and personal life, with women disproportionately affected due to unequal care responsibilities.

At the same time, companies have faced lower productivity, higher absenteeism, difficulties in retaining talent, and limited adaptability to global competitiveness. Recognising this situation, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB) identified the need to act and place the right to time at the centre of public and organisational policies. However, real impact requires the involvement of the economic sector and companies themselves, as they directly shape working time practices.

For this reason, AMB has developed two practical tools: the Guide with 55 proposals and the Decalogue of recommendations. Both are designed to inspire and support companies and organisations in adopting balanced and rational time management measures. The objective is to encourage businesses to lead this transformation, improving workers' well-being, gender equality, and social cohesion, while at the same time strengthening productivity, innovation, and competitiveness across the metropolitan economy.

POLICY DESCRIPTION

The policy has been implemented by the AMB as a set of practical tools addressed to the economic sector and companies, with the aim of promoting a balanced and rational organisation of working time. It consists of two complementary instruments:

- The Guide with 55 Proposals, which provides a wide range of concrete measures grouped in ten key areas: flexible schedules, work by objectives, rationalisation of long working days, support for work-life balance, teleworking and digital disconnection, healthier time management, collective bargaining, and training.
- The Decalogue of Recommendations, a shorter and more accessible tool that summarises the most relevant actions, designed for quick consultation and easy adoption by companies.

The implementation process is based on awareness-raising, guidance, and practical support for organisations. The documents are written in clear and pedagogical language, making them useful both for companies already working on time management and for those starting this transformation. AMB disseminates the materials through its networks, partnerships with employers' associations and trade unions, and direct collaboration with metropolitan companies

The policy does not impose obligations but encourages voluntary adoption of measures adapted to each company's size, sector, and specific needs. By providing concrete examples and evidence-based benefits, the policy creates incentives for companies to implement change. In this way, it helps businesses align with emerging labour trends, improve productivity and talent retention, and contribute to social well-being and gender equality.



KEY ASPECTS

- Voluntary adoption by companies: The policy is designed as a supportive framework, not an obligation, which requires the active engagement of businesses willing to improve their time organization practices.
- Adaptability to different sectors and company sizes: The guide and the decalogue offer flexible measures that can be tailored to small, medium, and large enterprises across diverse economic activities.
- Holistic approach: Goes beyond work-life balance by addressing productivity, gender equality, digital disconnection, health, mobility, and sustainability.
- Evidence-based proposals: Built on data and international references, the policy identifies structural problems in Spain and Catalonia (long days, unpaid overtime, time poverty) and provides practical solutions.
- Ten pillars of action: The measures are organised around ten strategic areas (flexible work, rationalised schedules, collective bargaining, training, etc.) to facilitate structured implementation.
- Awareness and capacity-building: Materials are written in clear language to raise awareness and provide training for managers and workers, fostering a culture of time as a strategic resource.
- Innovation in governance: It positions a metropolitan authority (AMB) as a pioneer in promoting the right to time as a public policy linked to social cohesion and economic competitiveness.
- Promotion of digital disconnection: Introduces innovative measures to regulate working time in the digital era, ensuring healthier boundaries between work and personal life.
- Support for gender equality: Recognises unpaid care work and proposes measures that foster shared responsibility between men and women.
- Dual tool strategy: The combination of a detailed 55-proposal guide and a concise Decalogue makes the policy both comprehensive and accessible, encouraging broader uptake by the business community.

 **RESULTS**

The Guide and the Decalogue have been distributed to the 36 municipalities of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, ensuring that local governments integrate them into their economic development strategies. They have also been delivered to the Offices of Business Support and to several business associations, reaching a wide range of companies across different sectors. This dissemination has positioned the materials as a reference framework for improving working time organisation in the metropolitan economy.

Qualitatively, the initiative has fostered dialogue between public administrations, employers, and workers on issues such as work-life balance, digital disconnection, and gender equality. By placing the right to time on the business agenda, AMB has promoted cultural change and inspired companies to experiment with more innovative and sustainable time practices.



Promoting institution
AMB — Area of Social and Economic
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PATERNITY AND MATERNITY LEAVES — POLÍTICA DE LICENCIAS FAMILIARES

In October 2018, the Buenos Aires City Legislature unanimously approved a bill that changed the leave system for its employees. The number of days of leave for parents or the other progenitor in the case of teachers, health professionals, and central government employees is increased, while this right is extended to cases of adoption.



POLICY OBJECTIVE

The extension of paternity leave, together with its application in cases of adoption, contributes to policies that aim to redistribute the time devoted to caregiving between men and women.

The main objectives are:

- Promote a care model that equalises responsibilities between men and women.
- Expand rights for the other parent.
- Promote the integration and continuity of women in the workforce.
- Incorporate a gender perspective.
- Promote the adoption of siblings and older children.
- Contribute to child development.



CONTEXT

The extension of paternity leave to 15 days for non-pregnant persons is an innovation in terms of leave, given that in Argentina, employment contract legislation establishes a maximum of two days of leave for fathers.



POLICY DESCRIPTION

The new policy of leaves involves:

- Exclusive leave for the non-gestational parent: Leave for the birth of a child is extended from 10 or 12 consecutive days (depending on rank) to 15 consecutive days. It includes 120 days of unpaid leave, which is non-transferable. There is also

a new paid leave of 30 consecutive days, which can be taken during the first year of the child's life. Both measures apply in the case of adoption, where there is also an increasing number of days depending on the number of children and adolescents adopted and their age.

- In the case of leave for the pregnant person: The pregnant person is given the option of transferring the last 30 days of their paid maternity leave to the non-gestational person if they are also a City employee.
- At the same time, leave for gender-based violence is created for the Hospital Professional Career, applicable to health professionals, which was already provided for in the general hierarchy, teachers, and the police.



KEY ASPECTS

The new leaves policy is innovative since the legislation no longer imposes childcare responsibilities on women and allows the family group to decide how to distribute leave days following the birth of a child. Women working in both the government and the private sector are now able to return to their jobs, with the other parent employed by the government assuming childcare responsibilities (with or without pay).



RESULTS

All personnel from the Government of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires benefits from this measure.



Photo credit: Shutterstock

Promoting institution
Subsecretaría de Gestión de
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15 MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE ORGANISATION OF WORKING TIME

A set of 15 measures promoted by Barcelona Activa to promote healthier, more equitable, efficient and sustainable time management within the organisation.



POLICY OBJECTIVE

- Promote healthy habits by improving time management and organisation within the organisation, as well as guaranteeing digital disconnection.
- Promote work-life balance for family, personal, and professional life by focusing on flexibility and compact working hours.
- Optimise working time for meetings and training sessions.
- Improve worker productivity by introducing more efficient working time organisation measures.



CONTEXT

Traditional working hours in Catalonia are characterised by long working hours and late lunch times, among others. These factors often make it difficult to balance personal and professional life, and can affect workers' health, well-being, and performance.

In this context, Barcelona Activa is aligned with Barcelona City Council's commitment to promoting a healthier, more equitable, efficient and sustainable culture of time. As the executive body of the City Council's economic promotion policies, Barcelona Activa has become a benchmark organisation in promoting a new time culture. It is an active part of the Barcelona Time Pact, and a member of the "steering group" of the Network of Companies for a New Working Time (NUST Network).

This task is carried out from two complementary perspectives: as a driving organisation through its services to companies, and as an internal organisation committed to a new working time culture. Barcelona Activa is therefore working to promote a new culture of time in the city's business fabric, integrating this vision into its lines of action and offering, specifically the Advisory Service for Companies



on Equality and Time Organisation. This service advises organisations on defining and implementing measures adapted to their needs.

From an internal perspective, it applies and develops its own measures that align with these objectives. The 15 measures for a healthier and more efficient organisation of time contribute to consolidating a working time culture as a benchmark within the public sector.

POLICY DESCRIPTION

The 15 measures are grouped into three main areas: time flexibility, organisational efficiency, and work well-being. They are specified as follows:

1. **Flexibility in starting time:** Employees are permitted to start the workday between 7:30 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. to better reconcile (or balance) family, personal, and work life.
2. **Flexible and compact working day:** The working hours are compacted. There is the option of completing three 6-hour working days between 7:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., plus two afternoons.¹ This allows for more time for family, personal, and community life.
3. **Flexibility in finishing time:** It is possible to finish work between 5:00 p.m. and, exceptionally, 8:00 p.m. to finish work at reasonable hours.
4. **Compacting morning hours:** Employees can exchange the 30-minute breakfast break for 30 minutes at lunchtime. This allows for regulating meals and finishing work earlier to better balance personal and work life.
5. **Advance lunchtime:** The scheduled time for meals is between 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. to align with European and healthier timetables.
6. **Availability of staff canteens:** In those buildings that have a staff canteen, such spaces are available from 1:00 p.m. onwards to encourage healthier hours.
7. **Reduction of work meals:** Work lunches are limited to a maximum of four per month. This reduces stress and improves health.

¹ Editing note: The working week for Barcelona Activa workers is 37,5 h per week.



8. Increased meeting effectiveness: An effective system with specific guidelines is implemented for all meetings. Punctuality, relevance, and efficiency are promoted in work meetings.

9. Meetings during working hours: Time for morning meetings is encouraged to be hosted between 9:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m., and afternoon meetings should start between 3:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.

10. Promotion of virtual meetings: Use of telephone conferences and videoconferencing equipment is promoted, thus contributing to more productive working time. Business travel for meetings is reduced by 30%.

11. Increased meeting productivity: Meeting rooms have designated areas to place mobile phones and tablets at the start of meetings. There are guidelines regulating moments for checking potential urgent matters.

12. Favouring concentration and utilisation of training sessions: Mobile phones and tablets are not to be used during internal training sessions, except during programmed breaks.

13. Optimisation of working time: General training is programmed using Outlook, Teams, project management, Face Team, etc., to make the staff working time more productive.

14. Guaranteeing the right to digital disconnection: Work-related emails, Telegram, or WhatsApp messages must not be sent between 8:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m., or during weekends or public holidays, except in cases of necessity or urgency.

15. Avoiding Weekend Work: Studies or reports should not be sent on Fridays for review over the weekend. These documents should primarily reach the interested parties between Monday and Wednesday to guarantee staff rest on weekends.



KEY ASPECTS

- Institutional commitment: This policy requires management adherence and leadership to promote an internal cultural change.
- Organisational adaptability: The measures are applied flexibly according to Barcelona Activa professional profiles and services.



- Integration with equality policies: time management is aligned with the organisation's equality and work-life balance objectives.
- Public innovation: Introduces the culture of time as a strategic axis in the internal management of a public body.
- Simplicity and replicability: The measures are clear, applicable, and easily transferable to other public or private entities.
- Multiple impact: The measures improve occupational health and well-being, increase productivity and promote the reduction of the gender gap linked to time management.



RESULTS

All Barcelona Activa workers are being benefited from these measures.



Promoting institution

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WORK-LIFE RECONCILIATION — CONCILIAZIONE VITA-LAVORO

The time policies of the Metropolitan City of Milan (CMM) are mostly aimed at the organisation's employees, but there are also initiatives involving the wider metropolitan area. In particular, CMM provides for the use of teleworking in two forms: e-work and smart work. In the first case, certain categories considered more vulnerable (such as parents of children under 14, people with medical conditions, caregivers, etc.) are allowed to work entirely from home, with only one day per week required in-person. In the second case, employees of CMM whose roles are compatible with smart work are allowed to work remotely for a few days each month. Additionally, other work-life balance measures are in place, such as the option to work part-time or to have flexible working hours for clocking in and out.



POLICY OBJECTIVE

- Monitor organizational efficiency of part-time/remote work: analyze the goals achieved through the introduction of part-time, remote work (e-work), or other work-life balance measures.
- Training, awareness, and ongoing education for management on authorizing part-time, e-work, and remote work (smart working) as forms of flexibility to be integrated into the organization of work. In addition, promote awareness of paternal parental leave.
- Continue implementing e-work projects, including in response to new work-life balance needs. Maintain the feasibility of access to e-work for employees falling into specific categories or with special needs.
- Extend organizational measures that support work-life balance to employees nearing retirement. Facilitate exit paths for those who, due to increased retirement age and stricter legal requirements, postpone retirement despite poor health or caregiving responsibilities.
- Sustainable mobility and mobility management: Promote sustainable commuting for staff, including through the role of the mobility manager, who drafts and enforces the Home-Workplace Mobility Plan.



CONTEXT

Milan is a city through which approximately 5.5 million people transit daily, and it is not exempt from the problems that affect major European cities: overpopulation, high cost of living, deteriorating air quality, urban heat islands, limited housing avai-



lability, and more. Our policy aims to address and mitigate these issues as much as possible. This not only helps our employees maintain a more balanced work-life rhythm and reduce their living costs, but also allows us to contribute to combating climate change and tackling environmental challenges. About 55% of our employees live outside the city of Milan, which makes commuting necessary to reach our offices located within the city. As a result, many rely on public transportation or use private vehicles.

Our policy aims to reduce the use of the latter. Furthermore, the limited availability of affordable housing and rising inflation —currently a global challenge— are pushing more and more people to move their residence outside the urban perimeter. Following the 2020 pandemic and resulting social isolation, there has been a growing awareness of the need to better balance work and personal life, while also increasing opportunities for social interaction. Lastly, the Italian Statistical Institute (ISTAT) data on parenthood show that the lack of support measures disproportionately affects women in the workplace. In fact, one in five women does not return to work after pregnancy, often due to factors such as inflexible working hours, lack of childcare facilities, and limited social and financial support. Work-life balance is governed by the Three-Year Positive Action Plan (PTAP), a document drafted annually by our organisation's Unified Guarantee Committee and published in accordance with current transparency regulations.

POLICY DESCRIPTION

- Monitor organisational efficiency of part-time and remote work: Safeguard and enhance the professional skills and career development opportunities of employees who use part-time arrangements or other forms of flexibility.
- Training, awareness, and continuous education for management on authorising part-time, e-work, and agile work as forms of flexibility to be integrated into work organisation.
- Ongoing implementation of e-work projects, also based on new work-life balance needs. Ensure continued accessibility to e-work in cases such as: working parents with children up to 14 years old, parents of adolescents facing challenging situations. -employees with family caregiving responsibilities, employees with health issues compatible with their work activity or returning after long-term illness.
- Promote and encourage an organisational culture that supports the use of parental leave by fathers.



- Extend work-life balance measures to employees approaching retirement. This initiative aims to facilitate exit strategies for those who, due to rising retirement ages and stricter eligibility criteria, delay retirement despite fragile health or caregiving responsibilities. Proposed solutions include flexitime, part-time, and exceptional remote work arrangements.
- Mobility management: The mandatory adoption of the Home-Work Travel Plan (PSCL) is required by law for companies and public administrations with local units employing more than 100 staff members. The plan established the role of the Mobility Manager, who is responsible for promoting sustainable commuting practices among personnel. The Mobility Manager also defines the PSCL as a planning tool for the systematic home-work travel of employees at a specific workplace.



KEY ASPECTS

- The Metropolitan City of Milan stands out for its focus on work-life balance, including flexible working hours, while ensuring service needs are met. In the 2025–2027 period, special attention is again being paid to changes in employment contracts from full-time to part-time and to the authorisation of flexible hours, especially to support caregivers and/or parents. We are among the few public administrations that allow e-work programs for these categories.
- Telework practices and outcomes are constantly monitored to consider employees' needs. Each year, through the Integrated Plan of Organisational Actions (PIAO) —a mandatory document for public administrations—three-year objectives and their current implementation status are outlined. One section of the PIAO includes the Operational Plan for Agile Work (POLA). The Metropolitan City of Milan is also one of the few public institutions that allows smart working for newly hired employees during their probationary period.
- The Metropolitan City of Milan is responsible for transportation and mobility in its territory. Therefore, it not only must comply with the legal requirement to adopt a Home-Work Travel Plan (PSCL), but it also has the actual capacity to positively impact the mobility of those working within the metropolitan area. This is particularly true for the implementation of the Biciplan, a network of bike lanes covering the entire metropolitan territory, designed in collaboration with local municipalities to ensure safe and efficient travel for two-wheeled mobility.



✓ RESULTS

In February 2025, staff hired in 2024 gave highly positive feedback on the organization's Smart Working practices: 93% rated the experience as good or excellent, with 55% choosing excellent. 96% said they opted for Smart Working not only for better work-life balance but because the hybrid model has become a true lifestyle, enhancing well-being. Access to remote work has been extended to parents of children up to 14 and, based on emerging needs, to part-time employees—especially for health reasons or after long-term illness.

As of December 31, 2024, there are 16 active e-work projects, showing continued preference for this model. New requests are expected, driven by younger employees becoming parents and older staff facing growing caregiving responsibilities—needs that go beyond what formal Smart Working alone can meet.



USE OF PUBLIC PROCUREMENT TO TACKLE FEMALE PART-TIME WORK

Municipal policy that promotes gender equality and the reduction of the feminization of part-time work through the incorporation of award criteria that encourage full-time employment in highly feminized sectors.



POLICY OBJECTIVE

- Combat the feminization of involuntary part-time work in sectors with high female employment rate.
- Promote gender equality in municipal procurement by encouraging full-time employment.
- Introduce gender-sensitive clauses within the framework of sustainable public procurement.
- Encourage companies bidding for municipal contracts to adopt fair and inclusive labour practices.
- Contribute to the reduction of precariousness and gender inequalities in the paid labour market, especially by contributing to reducing the feminisation of poverty.



CONTEXT

In Catalonia, the female part-time employment rate at the end of 2021 stood at 18.75%, more than 12% points higher than men, according to data from the Active Population Survey (EPA). This difference worsened as a result of the pandemic, which particularly impacted sectors with a high female presence. Although the official systems for recording and statistical information on the labour market (EPA, and Social Security, State Public Employment Service - SEPE) do not provide disaggregated data simultaneously by occupation, sex, and municipality, some examples at the national level show that, among the most feminised occupations, the following stand out: personal care work at home, domestic work, beauty and wellness treatments, childcare, primary care nursing, sewing, office and hotel cleaning, hairdressing, pattern making, personal assistance, social education, telemarketing and recreational and entertainment activities, among others.

Currently, data show that the female part-time employment rate has decreased in recent years, but there is still a significant gender gap in this indicator, higher by 10%

to the detriment of women, according to data from the Observatory of Work and Productive Model of the Department for Business and Labour of the Catalan Government.

Part-time work mainly affects women and is one of the fundamental causes of the wage gap. Taking into account the negative impact that precarious working conditions have on the quality of the service provided, it was considered necessary to include an automatic calculation award criterion that positively values those offers that incorporate a higher percentage of workers contracted full-time in public contracts aimed at feminised sectors.

POLICY DESCRIPTION

This policy aims to reduce the feminisation of part-time work and promote gender equality in municipal public procurement. To achieve this, a clause model is incorporated into the 2022 and subsequent Sustainable Public Procurement Objectives Plan as a social measure, which includes as an evaluation criterion the commitment of companies to incorporate a higher percentage of full-time people within the framework of contract execution, taking as a reference the minimum number of people and professional profiles indicated in the Technical Specifications ("Plec de Prescripcions Tècniques").

The score linked to this evaluation criterion is established by the corresponding municipal promoting unit. This policy is aligned with the objectives of socially responsible public procurement.



KEY ASPECTS

- Objective award criterion: ensures a transparent evaluation based on measurable data (percentage of full-time employment).
- Application in feminised sectors: prioritises areas with a high incidence of part-time work and job insecurity.
- Connection with the quality of the service: improved working conditions and direct contribution to a more efficient and higher quality execution of the contract.
- Technical simplicity: the scoring formula facilitates a homogeneous and verifiable application in different tenders.



- Technical simplicity: the scoring formula facilitates a homogeneous and verifiable application in different tenders.
- Public innovation: incorporates the gender perspective within the framework of sustainable procurement, promoting public procurement as an active tool for reducing inequalities.

✓ RESULTS

The clause has been designed and included in the successive Sustainable Public Procurement Objectives Plans from 2022 onwards. All staff have received training aimed at ensuring its inclusion in municipal contracts.



Pla d'Objectius de Contractació Pública Sostenible 2025

PLA D'OBJECTIUS DE CONTRACTACIÓ PÚBLICA SOSTENIBLE 2025

Promoting institution
Ajuntament de Barcelona



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Part 3

**WORK-RELATED
TIME POLICIES IN
RURAL AREAS**

COWOCAT_RURAL

Cowocat_Rural is a LEADER cooperation project implemented in Catalonia that promotes the creation and consolidation of coworking spaces as a tool for social, economic, and territorial development in rural areas.



POLICY OBJECTIVE

- Promote coworking as a new way of working through ICT in rural areas.
- Encourage the creation of coworking networks in rural areas.
- Facilitate teleworking and business activity without the need to move to cities.
- Contribute to population retention and the reduction of rural depopulation.
- Improve work-life balance by bringing homes and workplaces closer together.
- Promote territorial cooperation and knowledge exchange between workers, entrepreneurs, and companies.
- Contribute to improving the management and professionalisation of coworking spaces.
- Encourage and facilitate the mobility of coworkers and entrepreneurs between different coworking spaces in rural Catalonia.



CONTEXT

The creation of a project such as Cowocat_Rural responds to the urgent need to stop depopulation and the loss of talent in Catalonia's rural areas. For years, these territories have witnessed the migration of young people to cities in search of educational and employment opportunities that are scarce locally, leaving behind a fragile economic fabric heavily dependent on traditional sectors such as agriculture or seasonal tourism. This situation exacerbated territorial inequalities and threatened the social and economic sustainability of inland municipalities. However, the expansion of high-speed internet and the rise of remote work began to open new avenues for economic development.

In this context, Cowocat_Rural emerged as a strategic response, providing villages with resources and collaborative spaces to attract professionals, foster networking, stimulate entrepreneurship, and promote social innovation.

POLICY DESCRIPTION

TCowocat_Rural is a LEADER cooperation project led by the Consorci Intercomarcal d'Iniciatives Socioeconòmiques (Local Action Group Ribera d'Ebre - Terra Alta). It originated from the opportunity to transfer the pilot rural coworking experience initiated in 2014 in Riba-roja d'Ebre (Zona Líquida) to other rural areas of Catalonia, promoting entrepreneurial activity linked to the use of information and communication technologies.

Building on this experience, 11 Catalan Local Action Groups (LAGs) launched an interterritorial cooperation project to create and expand a network of coworking spaces. The initiative aims to enhance the attraction and retention of talent, stimulate job creation and economic activity in rural areas, and disseminate the values of coworking and remote work across participating territories.

Coworking is a way of working that allows independent professionals, entrepreneurs, and SMEs from various sectors to share the same physical or virtual workspace, developing professional projects independently while fostering collaborative initiatives. This new way of working represents an opportunity for professionals who wish to operate in a collaborative environment without leaving a rural setting. Indirectly, rural coworking spaces generate local economic activation and help retain the active population.

In summary, Cowocat_Rural seeks to attract and retain qualified human capital in rural areas—a key factor for territorial development. Its promoters recognised that rural coworking spaces could stimulate economic activity and help maintain populations in areas threatened by depopulation, offering opportunities to professionals who want to work collaboratively without leaving the countryside.

KEY ASPECTS

- Cowocat_Rural works to stimulate economic activity, attract young, qualified professionals to rural areas, and combat depopulation by promoting the values of coworking. Its concept is based on the need to foster entrepreneurship through information and communication technologies. The project has developed a methodology for creating and supporting a network of coworking spaces and actively promotes this practice among professionals and local stakeholders interested in joining the network.

- Key criteria for a coworking space to become part of the Cowocat_Rural network include the existence of a dedicated workspace, professional diversity, a community with a strong sense of belonging, proactive knowledge-sharing, and the appointment of a community facilitator responsible for promoting activities and managing the community.
- In terms of innovation, Cowocat_Rural introduces novel approaches to rural coworking, having developed a working methodology that previously did not exist in these territories.

✓ RESULTS

- Between 2014 and 2025, 49 coworking spaces joined the Cowocat_Rural network, engaging over 300 professionals.
- During this period, more than 30 training and networking activities were conducted, alongside the development of a website, social media channels, and audiovisual content.
- Four editions of Coworkfest, the annual rural coworking festival, were organised, featuring 15 spaces, 25 activities, and 400 participants in the 2024 edition.
- Additionally, the RuralPass, a mobility passport for coworking spaces, and the Rural Coworking Observatory, a biennial report capturing coworker feedback, were launched.
- At the international level, we participate in the “CoLabora: European cooperation project on coworking spaces in rural areas” in collaboration with partners from Ireland, Lithuania, the United Kingdom, and Germany. This initiative aims to stimulate economic development, retain residents, attract new ones, and foster a European network of coworking spaces.



Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación | Consorci Intercomarcal d'Iniciatives Socioeconòmiques | Unió de Municipis i Comunitat Autònoma de Catalunya | Comissió Europea | Consell d'Europa | PDR | Cis | Diputació de Tarragona

Promoting institution

Local Action Group (LAG) Inter-District Consortium for the Promotion of Socioeconomic Initiatives (CIS), in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, and Food (DARPA) of the Catalan Government.



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RURAL AGENDA OF CATALONIA — AGENDA RURAL DE CATALUNYA

A strategy developed with broad participation from local stakeholders and institutions, establishing actions to ensure a vibrant, balanced, and sustainable rural world. It includes specific measures to improve employment opportunities, promote teleworking and coworking, and facilitate work-life balance and time management in rural areas.



POLICY OBJECTIVE

The Agenda's objectives are as follows:

- People, well-being, and demographic challenge: Strengthen social cohesion and well-being by improving essential services for people's full development, equal opportunities, and support. Additionally, address the demographic challenge in terms of social rootedness, aging with dignity, welcoming new populations, and creating new opportunities to live in rural areas.
- Ecological transition: Accelerate the energy transition, regenerative management of natural resources and protection of ecosystem services, and implement measures for climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Connected territory: Ensure digitalization, sustainable mobility, and territorial intelligence.
- Agrifood system: Reconnect the links of the agrifood system, generational succession in agriculture and fisheries, fair value chains, food sovereignty, and agricultural and forestry production and distribution.
- Forest management: Silviculture, forest fire prevention, and opportunities for non-timber forest products.
- Innovation and social and economic revitalization: Drive rural innovation, economic revitalization, and cultural vibrancy through rural generational succession, economic activity, heritage valorization, and cultural innovation.
- Governance: Build a solid, accessible, and efficient governance framework by reconnecting urban-rural needs and realities; a legal framework and decision-making systems, and also implement actions that guarantee true rural development.



CONTEXT

Catalonia's rural areas face structural challenges such as depopulation, lack of job opportunities, the digital divide, and difficulties in accessing basic services and mobility. These factors often necessitate long travel distances and hinder the work-life-community balance. With the aim of reversing these trends and placing rurality at the centre of sustainable development strategies, the Interdepartmental Commission on Rural Depopulation, chaired by the Department of Climate Action, Food and Rural Agenda, commissioned the elaboration of the Rural Agenda of Catalonia. The process was based on a participatory methodology, involving over 1,200 people and entities through thematic and territorial workshops, consultations, and open participation channels.

The result is a strategic roadmap that, in coherence with the Urban Agenda and Agenda 2030, recognises the key role of rural areas in the country's sustainability and establishes actions to ensure a vibrant, diversified, and populated future for rural territories.



POLICY DESCRIPTION

The Rural Agenda of Catalonia (2022) is the framework document that establishes seven major challenges and over 800 actions to strengthen rural areas. In relation to time policies, the Agenda includes specific measures in areas such as:

- Mobility and access to work: Rethink the public transport network, implement on-demand micro-transport, and promote sustainable alternatives like rural car-sharing or green ways.
- Employment and teleworking: Promote teleworking as a tool for rootedness, create shared workspaces in micro-villages, foster alliances between rural and urban coworking spaces, and offer incentives to companies to hire people residing in rural areas.
- Working conditions and work-life balance: Improve conditions for typically rural and care jobs, reduce wage differences compared to urban areas, and highlight the role of women in rural economic and social activity.

These measures directly link the Rural Agenda with the promotion of a more rational and sustainable use of working time in rural environments, with the aim of reducing territorial and gender inequalities and improving the well-being and quality of life of the population.



KEY ASPECTS

Key aspects include:

- Development through an extensive participatory process involving over 1,200 people and entities, ensuring legitimacy and adaptation to the real needs of rural areas.
- Innovation in incorporating time policies into rural areas, traditionally absent from the work-life balance and time management agenda.
- A comprehensive approach combining mobility, local public services, digitalisation, and new forms of work (teleworking, coworking), facilitating population rootedness.
- A transversal gender and care perspective: measures to reduce territorial and gender inequalities in access to work and shared responsibility for care.
- Linkage with international agendas (Agenda 2030 and Urban Agenda), ensuring coherence with sustainable development goals.



RESULTS

The Rural Agenda has driven multiple concrete initiatives that contribute to a more rational use of time and improved well-being in rural areas. Some examples:

- Implementation of the first cycle of early childhood education in rural schools, to guarantee access to local education and promote family reconciliation.
- Shuttle project in Alta Segarra, a flexible on-demand transport service that reduces travel and optimises mobility in low-density areas.
- Rural Mobility Working Group, a consensus-building space that has produced a document with 50 proposals to improve mobility in rural environments.
- Mobile slaughterhouse, which avoids long-distance animal transport, reduces costs and time for farmers, and promotes local economic rootedness.
- Creation of coworking spaces and promotion of teleworking, to encourage new forms of employment and reduce travel.
- Rootedness Program, to reverse population loss in small municipalities and foster territorial cohesion. These actions contribute to reducing territorial inequalities and ensuring that people living in rural areas have access to job opportunities, services, and living conditions comparable to urban areas.

There are many examples of proposals that respond to the Rural Agenda and are also related to time policies (reducing travel time between people and basic services, improving mobility, Coworking projects, among others). Not all proposals involve the participation of the Catalan Government; many are the result of private entities that are part of the Rural Agenda's Driving Commission, local administrations, or networking with different actors.

Agenda Rural de Catalunya

#FuturCompartit #AgendaRuralCat



**Catalunya
2030**

Agenda
Rural

Promoting institution

Department for Climate Action, Food, and Rural Agenda of the Catalan Government, with the participation of the Association for Rural Initiatives of Catalonia (ARCA), the Catalan Association of Municipalities (ACM), the Association of Microtowns of Catalonia and the Advisory Council for Sustainable Development (CADS).



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