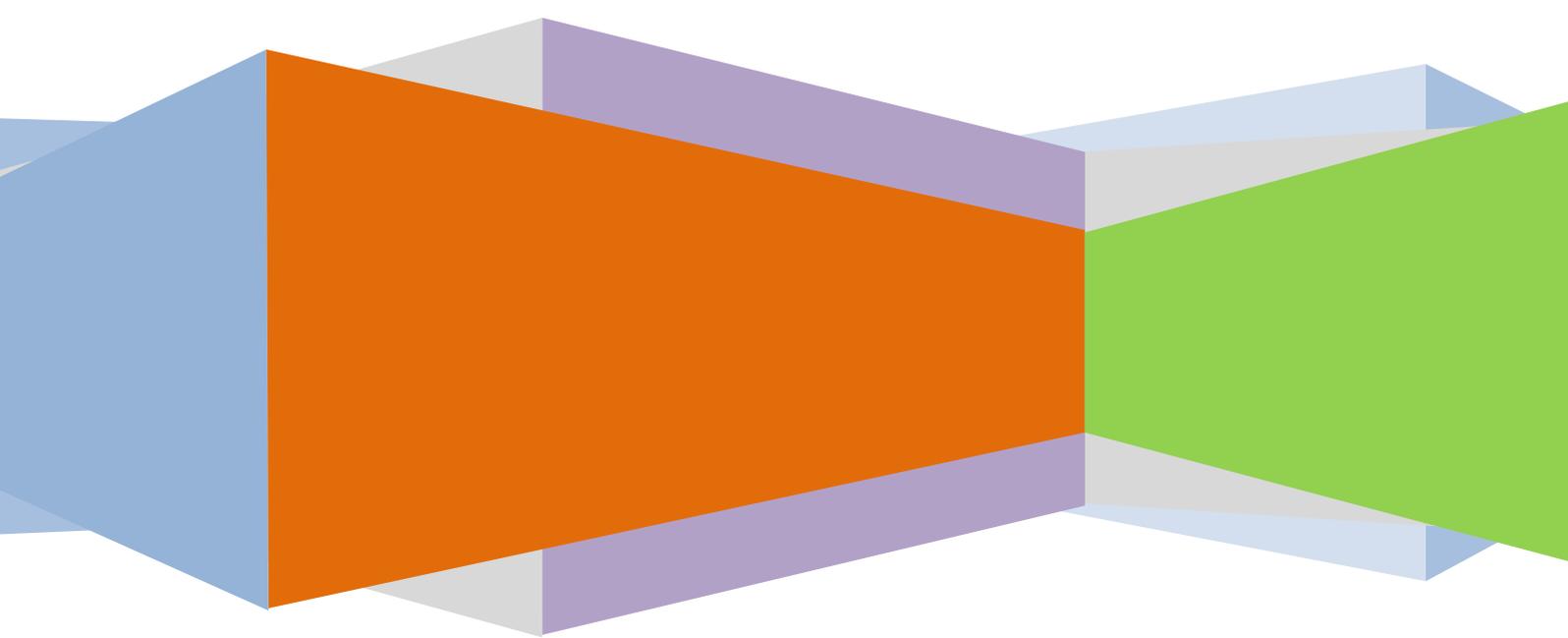




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Focus Group Common Report





Partners



GrowthCoop (Spain)



CPIP (Romania)



Orange Hill (Poland)



INDEPCIE (Spain)



LUV (Slovenia)



I&F (Ireland)

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1 Project SNAIL

Nowadays workers have a frenetic work pace and multitasking is seen as a great skill. However, the idea of being more efficient when doing more than one task at a time is just an illusion. It has been proven that performing more than one task at a time decreases productivity and concentration and increases the likelihood of making mistakes and suffering from stress and anxiety at work. This is the reason why a balance between work and personal life must be found and this is where the slow movement becomes important.

The **slow movement** started in Italy in 1986 with the slow food movement which defended the importance of quality, simplicity and pleasure. It began as a response to the growing popularity of fast food with the objective of returning to our roots and forgetting the rush and lack of time that prevail in modern life today. The slow concept expanded to other areas and today we can find concepts like slow fashion, slow home or slow life. These concepts have also reached the world of work where we talk about slow business, slow management and the most important aspect within the framework of this project, **slow work**. The common goal of all these concepts is to make us more aware of the use of our time and to help us realize that we do not need to fill every hour of our day with hectic activities.

SNAIL (Slow, Necessary and Improves the Level) is based on the idea of achieving more and being more productive by working calmly and with dedication, paying attention to detail and enjoying the creative process.

SNAIL's philosophy is linked to the introduction of **Emotional Intelligence** (EI) in the workplace, **cognitive flexibility** and the **development of soft skills** in the world of work. That is to say, those soft skills that the job market demands today and that will be basic not only for workers but also for companies, organizations and entrepreneurs in the next decade. SNAIL has a **double focus on both the worker and the final product**. For companies that follow this philosophy the most important is to increase the level of motivation and creativity of their employees so that productivity will be higher and long-term employment possibilities will be better. At the same time, they make customers happier than if they were offering a product in large quantity but lower in quality. SNAIL is committed to projects and products carried out with the utmost dedication, thinking of more benefits for companies and more stable jobs but also of establishing long-term professional relationships.

The objective of SNAIL is to bring the benefits of slow work in relation to the way of working and productivity to companies and their employees.



2 Background

The aim of the focus groups was to analyse with experts the results that were obtained in each partner country in the State of the Art. These results were included in the national reports and gathered in the common report. The main objective was to investigate the experiences, attitudes, feelings, opinions and reactions of the participants about the concept of cognitive and behavioural flexibility in the workplace.

The following situations and issues affecting work pace in the workplace, with the consequences of lack of productivity and mental stress on employees were addressed in the focus groups:

- Healthy balance between business challenges and people's needs
- Structure of the working day. Breaks, routines...
- Multitasking and decision-making
- Time management at the heart of work. Distribution between complex and simple tasks
- The art of delegation vs. the temptation to do everything

Some other important aspects were mentioned as well:

- Slow philosophy and mental health
- Physical and personal risks of fast work
- Negative effects on the company
- Lack of organisation based on a clear and stated vision
- The cult of speed: More is more? Faster is better?

Some of the focus group sessions were held face-to-face with a moderator (CPIP and LUV), there were also individual interviews with people who didn't manage to attend the meeting (CPIP), online meetings (I&F and Poland) and Google forms (Indepcie).

The Focus Group sessions carried out in the different countries followed the same steps. First the participants introduced themselves. After, the project SNAIL was presented to them (the topic of the project, its objectives and the target groups addressed) as well as the results of previous activities. Then, they were asked the questions below and they were presented a list of enemies of the work pace.

The discussion was encouraged taking as departure point this questionnaire:

- 1. What do you think of the concept of slow work?**
- 2. Are you aware of having suffered the effects of an inadequate work pace?**
- 3. If so, can you give a concrete example?**
- 4. How do you think this situation can be improved?**



5. **What strategies have you implemented or could you implement to improve your approach to work?**
6. **Do you delegate appropriately? If not, what impact has it had on your performance and that of the organisation?**

The participants were also presented the work rate management's main enemies:

1. **Distractions and disorder**
2. **Time management**
3. **Emotional balance**
4. **Fear to say no**
5. **Avoiding delegation**
6. **Stress and lack of relaxation**
7. **Low self-esteem**
8. **Focusing and prioritising**
9. **Development of habits and routines**
10. **Lack of personal organisation/planning**
11. **Unawareness of multitasking as a system**
12. **Any others?**

3 Profile of participants

The focus group carried out by **CPIP** was composed by entrepreneurs, Human Resources managers and trainers and facilitators (working with people in career guidance and job performance). The participants in the focus group led by **Orange Hill** included entrepreneurs, managers, CEOs, Human Resources specialists, a career guider and experts/trainers. The experts who participated in the focus group carried out by **LUV** were an entrepreneur and ex-CEO of a leading Slovenian company, the director of the municipal library, a human resource manager from a global corporation, a human resource manager working in the public sector, a career guider and counsellor working in the public sector, an expert in professional mobility and organisational psychologist and a facilitator. The participants of **I&F** focus group came from the areas of entrepreneurship, management and CEOs, sales, human resources management, training and facilitation. The experts in the focus group of **Indepcie** were an art restorer, a business management consultant, a head of service working in the public sector, three psychologists, two psychology professors and a tourist guide.



4 Analysis of results

- **What do you think of the concept of slow work?**

Most of the participants agreed that the implementation of slow work is necessary. The participants in the Orange Hill focus group think that the concept of slow work or slow management promotes authenticity, sensitivity and mindfulness. According to them *SLOW is not a question of productivity but of building relationships, learning together and transferring values.*

In Slovenia, experts had the same opinion. They think that *using your time in a more meaningful and productive way as well as devoting your energy to focus on individual tasks is a necessary approach with a massive influence on a healthier work-life balance. There is a need for a more focused and mindful approach to work that reflects in better results, lesser mistakes and smaller need to check and review the tasks several times before completion.* They believe that slow work would result in greater quality of the work done and better well-being of employees and, therefore, lower risks of diseases related to a fast pace of life.

In Ireland, experts think that people can use their time in a more meaningful and productive way *by taking controlled breaks and devoting your energy to focus on individual tasks.* They discussed that many people think that their self-esteem is tied to their work and how that is why a different approach to work can have a great influence on people's quality of life. Furthermore, slow work would *create more room to consider new and more creative solutions to our daily challenges.* Some participants in the CPIP's focus group think that *slow work is closely linked to employers' trust in employees.*

Spanish participants added that the implementation of slow work *is the best way to be more productive and efficient and to avoid stress and stress-related problems* and that *a slower work pace improves concentration, creativity and well-being in the workplace.*

The Slovenian participants made some comments about the negative connotation of the word "slow" but as experts in Poland said *SLOW is about authenticity, mindfulness, listening, choosing solutions that may be good but which are longer-lasting, not looking for substitutes.* They think that people should not only take into account efficiency. However, they agree that the concept of slow work is not for everyone. Managers in some companies would argue that they cannot slow down because they want to increase productivity and it is contradictory. Romanian participants agreed that it is important to know how to implement slow work and not to deviate from the initial plan. They think that this concept would be adopted by open-minded managers and entrepreneurs.

Experts in Slovenia think that the expected rapid responsiveness leads to competitiveness since the technology people use nowadays *makes everyone feel we need to work fast.*



Therefore, people make mistakes. A Human Resources officer in a manufacturing company pointed out that fast work cannot be avoided in that field. Nevertheless, automatism in manufacturing makes it easier to prevent errors and allows for more short pauses for employees to take a break. As a result, they focus better and make fewer errors. In management, people have a lot of tasks to perform but they can prioritise. Another Human Resources officer thinks that in administrative, finance or reporting fields slow work *is difficult to follow* because employers are not interested in it.

One of the Spanish participants thinks that, while it is true that there are diseases related to a fast pace of work, it is a question of management and personal responsibility.

However, the Slovenian conclusion would apply to the general opinion which is that *society needs new approaches to make a lesser impact of physical and personal risks of fast work and thus release the company of negative effects of fast work.*

- **Are you aware of having suffered the effects of an inadequate work pace?**

The participants in Romania said that there is confusion between challenge and stress due to the inadequate work pace. They mentioned that pressure is unavoidable because of the demands of the current work environment and even though they know the slow work theory they agreed that when it comes to practice it is difficult to accept it. They believe this happens because of the idea imposed on the market that benefits show the qualities and potential of a company and this is against the well-being of employees.

In Poland, most of the interviewees admitted that they work too fast and perform a lot of tasks every day.

In the case of Slovenia, 6 out of 7 participants have been affected by an inadequate work pace or know someone who has. The members of the focus group think that it is very important to control themselves and the situation but that employees need to be equipped with knowledge and methods and they is normally missing in most companies. One of the problems is that employees in this country are more concerned about serious illnesses than psychological and physical health.

The members of the Irish focus group see having an adequate work pace as a high priority in order to have a balanced mental health. They said that since the average worker is busier than ever, burnout is becoming more and more common and slow work is more relevant than ever before. However, it is a challenge to implement it. They think that an inadequate work pace is the main factor of depression. They reinforce the idea mentioning research that has shown a gradual increase in anxiety and depression and a gradual decrease in morale as people work faster. It is not surprising that 40% of disability in Ireland is caused by mental health. What it is surprising is that only 6% of the health budget is allocated to it. As the



participants in the focus group said *there is a complete disconnect between the scale of the problem and resources there to meet it.*

In Spain, most of the respondents said that they have not suffered any negative effects due to inadequate work pace. However, they admit that these negative effects exist. Most of the participants are experts in the field of psychology and they may know how to deal with these negative effects and how to see them in other workers.

Something interesting that experts in Ireland and Spain mentioned is that slow work is seen as non-productive. In Ireland they mentioned that *employees are seen as lazy by those who are multitasking* while in Spain one of the experts said that *some workers associate stress and anxiety with being more efficient and better workers*. Participants in CPIP focus group think that the main enemy nowadays is that employees do not give up this wrong thinking.

- **If so, can you give a concrete example?**

The examples given by Romanian participants are:

- In a PR/Publicity company, employees gave up and resigned due to many required tasks in a short time. The fear of presenting certain information to many people led to temporary failure at work.
- Loss of motivation and desire to perform in important projects due to work stress and limited time.
- Family business brings the most problems to outside employees because there is no possibility to make the difference and act as a manager.

In Poland, one person said that she maintains a work-life balance despite being the manager and owner of a company and she succeeds.

Slovenian experts gave a lot of personal examples of how an inadequate pace of work affected their performance:

- One of the participants said that in her 30 years of experience as a director she has adjusted to it. *If you are dealing with five things at the same time, you get nervous. Usually, the little things and unpredictable situations are the ones that have a more negative effect on the pace of work.*
- There are moments when people feel restless and they cannot sleep despite their fatigue. In those moments, it is important to be able to find a solution and it needs to be fast.
- *If you get caught up in a cycle of many work commitments, deadlines, projects that you want to carry out responsibly and of quality, and in addition to the planned activities there are always new obligations coming and thus the consequences are inevitable.* These are reflected in health.



- *Technology today has the greatest influence on the work pace. However, the responsibility is the same as it used to be, except that once the worker had more time to read the mail and documents, and the worker had more time to take responsibility. With this pressure and the weight of decisions and the pressure of leadership, the stress of every employee grows.*

One of the participants who have not suffered from inadequate work pace in Slovenia said that he usually stops, calms down and thinks. He tries to avoid reacting quickly. He also tries to work for eight hours and to assure himself eight hours of sleep. Another important thing that he mentioned is that he does not let people burden him with work commitments in the afternoon and tries to avoid burdening others. He takes three weeks off and only does something related to work once or twice a week. He thinks that people need a week just to switch off and start enjoying themselves so there must be a long enough period of time on leave. The other participant who has not suffered from this thinks that delegating tasks at the right time is the secret.

In Ireland, experts reached the conclusion that the mental health of employees is determining in their overall health and poor mental health and stressors at the workplace can contribute to a range of physical illnesses which can affect employee's performance in both their personal and professional lives and impact their morale adversely.

In Spain, three of the participants mentioned that they have suffered negative effects due to inadequate work pace and they go from physical to psychological effects that affect their performance in the workplace.

Physical and psychological consequences of an inadequate work pace mentioned by the experts in the focus groups

- Insomnia
- Stress
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Pressure
- Frustration
- Loss of concentration
- Confusion
- Forgetfulness
- Mental blocks
- Reduced quality of the work done
- Some tasks left undone
- Mistakes
- Human errors
- High staff turnover
- Negative impact on productivity and profits
- An increase in costs to deal with the issues
- Fear of being criticized by the manager and the colleagues for having a slower work style
- Neglect of private life
- Feeling unwell
- Burnout symptoms
- Rapid heartbeat
- Shallow breathing



- Increase in accidents
- Tasks needed to be checked several times and corrections made
- Poor decision making
- Dropping out of work
- Increased absenteeism
- Cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, endocrine and muscular disorders
- Heart disease
- Back pain
- Headaches
- Various minor illnesses

- **How do you think this situation can be improved?**

The same conclusion was reached in all the focus groups: the solution needs to be a common agreement between employees and employers as it is not an individual need but something that affects the whole company. The negative effects of an inadequate work pace could be mitigated if workers had role models in their company.

As experts in Spain mentioned *if the leader of a company sets an example of good habits, these are transferred to the rest of the workers. It is important that these good habits are implemented from the beginning when employees are most motivated. In addition, allocating more time and resources to implement methodologies that objectively measure the most suitable workload for each worker can improve productivity and the well-being of workers.*

Other things mentioned in Spain were:

- Good organisation
- Training for leaders and then workers
- Training in soft skills
- Short breaks after periods of high concentration
- Avoiding multitasking
- Not to link incentives to workload but to excellence, creativity, talent and added value of the employees. This aspect was strongly emphasised by the members of the focus group.

In Romania, the participants agreed that *busy does not equal productive* and they suggested the following measures to improve the situation:

- *Slowing down to be seen as a great productivity tool.*
- *Engage in activities that allow participating at a slower pace.*
- *Stop creating extra work both for yourself and others.*
- *People must consider themselves competent, reliable and trustworthy*
- *Focus on “do it right rather than fast”.*

In Poland, members of the focus group think that *businesses should understand why employees want to work slow and why it is worth employing such employees*, for example because they have specific competences such as a higher level of awareness or greater maturity. Employers would benefit from attracting a specific type of employee who has these valuable competences. Regarding the benefits for the company, *it is not*



the pace that counts but the humanization and return to the core of human relations. The benefits are visible not only at the level of relationships but also because thanks to being aware of the presence and sensitivity of others, people have more information and can do their tasks better which means profit for the organization.

The solution given by the experts in Slovenia are the following:

- *Teaching the employees about the slow work philosophy and helping them in implementing the approach to their everyday division of tasks and activities connected to work.* People work more efficiently if they organise themselves, carry out more thorough work, prioritise tasks correctly and are able to reject certain tasks by giving arguments, avoid distractions and delegate tasks to colleagues. A competent leader plays an important role in this so training managers is crucial in this process.
- Raising awareness, educating and advising employees. Individuals must be empowered to identify and become aware at what stage they are in a timely manner. It is important to know techniques and skills to know how to make certain changes.
- *The CEO should try to ensure a good working atmosphere and have an important goal ahead of them.*
- The organization should ensure the conditions for people to open up. *This would be achieved through a survey or a research and an organisational culture where this is not only allowed but also desirable.* The aim is to create openness and trust and that opening up and expressing one's weak points is not seen as not being strong.
- Motivators. It is important to change the organisational culture and that individual values are respected. Things should be fair and employees should have the chance to develop since these are basic human needs. *The way employers behave towards employees, the way they communicate and the level of information and involvement play an important role.*

In Ireland, the conclusion was that organisations and businesses must find ways to help their employees have an adequate work pace and give them the means to learn how not to fall into stress, excessive pressures and poor mental health. They also mentioned that while pressure can be a motivating factor, excessive pressure and demands can cause stress and that some occupations are at more risks of the mental health problems resulting from it.

As mentioned by the experts in Ireland, *projects such as SNAIL can help highlight these issues and get companies to take measures to tackle key questions related to employee health and productivity.* This project would help companies adapt to new procedures since lack of flexibility, lack of change and time management, lack of task organisation and prioritisation, deficits in emotional self-regulation are some of the shortcomings



revealed in the focus groups. Employers would learn how to appropriately allocate tasks and jobs, introduce improvements in performance-enhancing procedures, provide employees with training to update their job skills and not to link incentives to workload.

- **What strategies have you implemented or could you implement to improve your approach to work?**

The strategies implemented by the Romanian experts were:

- Create a nice work environment. No high costs required and no big efforts but with good results.
- Promoting messages and encouragement quotes on how to remember that we are more than our work, stay in the moment, learn how to relax no matter how challenging the work gets.
- Creating a special space for collaboration and meetings
- Creating a relaxing area
- Creating spaces specially designed for smokers and non-smokers

They pointed out strategies that could be implemented in the short term:

- Doing an activity together once a month
- Distributing the tasks considering the profile and working style of each employee
- Extra seminars to help employees learning process
- Using co-working spaces to make the work meaningful
- Having a greater control of the job performance

In Poland, experts said that organisations spend more time implementing tools and mastering them in order to have more time for tasks than actually doing tasks. Two good practices were mentioned:

- The first one consisted of audits. Sometimes employers need to step back in order to move forward. *The implementation of slow work should be done on two levels: the first condition is audit and self-assessment.* The second one is inclusiveness, people's attention to each other and relationships.
- The second good practice is the habit of working only for 8 hours, something managers do not allow themselves and the employees to do. There is a need to implement formal and tough solutions because the concept of slow work and work-life balance function in management theory but are poorly executed. *Managers must be obliged to comply with the arrangements.*

They mentioned the example of a company that implement real work- life balance. These are the strategies that are followed in that company:



- *At a specific time, the entire team closes the day with a quick summary of what each employee has done. Every day at the same time, the entire team without exception. After this short meeting, nobody works anymore. As a result, employees are refreshed, have more energy, are more effective and their productivity is greater.*

The strategies discussed by the respondents in LUV's focus group were:

- Avoiding distractions: some participants indicated that they focus on their tasks better when they turn off notifications and when they don't take their mobile phones to meetings. People tend to feel guilty when they don't answer a call immediately. "Silent hours" and transferring incoming calls have been one of the most effective methods.
- Self organisation. Being organised is a key element in getting things done. They indicated that *the new generation has become adjusted to being at work from 8pm to 10pm* and that leads them to be disorganised. They can postpone tasks because they feel they have time to do them later. *If they learn to organise their work from 8am to 4pm, they can have their free afternoons, which will result in less mental stress and better work-life balance.*
- Proper delegation of tasks.
- Setting individual priorities. Some participants pointed out that *Slovenians have a lot of trouble with saying "no" to someone.*
- Raising awareness. It is difficult to change a pattern of behaviour since it requires certain work and effort and that the person steps out of their comfort zone. *Educating and coaching as well as planning for more concrete changes with the aim of improving the approach to work is needed in the process.*
- Physical activity. Doing exercise after work helps to make you more focused and reduces stress and anxiety. They mentioned that that is why sportsmen are usually very well-organised.

The ideas discussed in Ireland were:

- Remote work. The commute to and from work is stressful and, according to a survey mentioned during the focus group, 23% of Irish people have quit a job because of it. The pandemic has shown that it is possible to work remotely, even just a few times each month, which *can significantly lower stress and save valuable time otherwise spent commuting.* Nowadays, video-conference and messaging tools like Slack help to team collaboration so in most companies there is no reason not to do it. *It helps employees disconnect from their office mindset to improve productivity and open themselves up to new ways of creative problem-solving. Removing the physical space that you associate with work—whether that's the office or the vehicle required to get there—can provide tremendous benefits for your mental health and performance.*



- Having boundaries. Setting boundaries between designated work and leisure time allow people to maintain a healthy mindset and avoid burnout. *“Timeboxing” or separating the schedule into chunks is used for work-related tasks but it can also play a crucial role in helping people set windows in their schedule for much-needed personal time.* Relaxation is a way to maximise performance.
- Monotasking. Multitasking can make things go wrong or make people forget things. It is useful managing day-to-day activities but it can keep people from really concentrating on one thing. Doing one thing at a time and setting boundaries between tasks, helps people to complete *complex projects faster and deliver better results because they can focus on a deeper level.*

In Spain, the most commonly used strategies are:

- Organising and prioritising tasks at the beginning of the day. *It is important for workers to reflect, review and be clear about the next steps and tasks they have to perform. Having a clear objective helps to solve unforeseen events that commonly arise in a day’s work. Organising work and time without underestimating the number of tasks is key. In order for people not to overload themselves with tasks and to be able to recover, they can double the estimated time that a task requires. In this way, the worker can devote the necessary time to each task.*
- Avoiding multitasking by committing to a task and avoiding distractions and interruptions. *Once deadlines have been set, it is important to be consistent and committed to your work.*
- Working in 45-minute time slots with 5-minute breaks in between. One of the participants *proposed the Pomodoro technique, which consists of using a timer to divide the work into blocks (usually 25 minutes) and taking 5-minute breaks in between. After four consecutive blocks of work, the worker can take a longer break of 20 or 30 minutes. Over time, they learn to be more productive in each block.*
- Soft skills
- Work organisation focused on quality of life instead of following traditional models that are less productive.
- Mindfulness
- Starting the day with 15 minutes of concentration exercises
- Not talking about work after the workday



They suggested *talent retention and the design of incentives in relation to reduced working hours, work-life balance and personal quality of life* as strategies that companies can follow to improve the well-being of workers in the workplace.

- **Do you delegate appropriately? If not, what impact has it had on your performance and that of the organisation?**

In Romania, the members of the focus group assumed that every entrepreneur, manager and employee makes management mistakes or makes the wrong decisions which means that they do not always distribute the tasks properly or they have to deal with unpleasant situations or they do not see the growth in performance that they would like to see in the company, the employees or their job. One of the experts said that *we live in a world where flexibility and slow work are considered weaknesses and enemy of productivity.*

In the case of Slovenia, most participants from managing positions delegate tasks appropriately but *they feel that there is always room for improvement.* In this process communication and trust are key.

They mentioned examples of good delegation techniques:

- in which they ask employees to do a task and trust them and if they get turned down by the employee they find another solution.
- Making sure that the employee has all the necessary information and being available for any further questions or assistance.
- -Not interfering with the tasks and check it with the employee when it is done. They highlighted that *there are different kinds of employees, some need to be pushed while others are completely independent* but if they accept a task they have to do it.
- Having feedback from employees.
- Allow employees to have their ideas and be creative. They need to know how to put these ideas into practice and the employer has to trust them.

They said that it is hard for some managers to leave the tasks to someone else because they find it hard to trust them and think that certain tasks will be done faster and better if they do them. *Some leaders feel they will lose out on the importance and others do not know how to do it.* If they do not delegate they will have negative consequences. Communication in this process is key. Delegation has positive effects like stress reduction, better focus on other tasks and efficiency.

For the participants in LUV's focus group that are not members of the management board, delegating sometimes represents a problem. They find themselves in distress



because they feel that they need additional skills. They are aware that their efficiency and the efficiency of the organisation could be better.

Experts in Ireland feel the same way. They would appreciate support and formal training in this area. They are concerned about *the long term impacts of having a very significant proportion of employees under stress for a very long period of time*. Societal impacts such as rise in mental health issues, drug and alcohol abuse and ongoing stress and depression have to be addressed.

Poor delegation in tasks, stress and an inadequate work pace can lead to many employees to self-doubt, feelings of stress, anxiety and depression. They also experience a sense of isolation as a result of being under stress and the lack of support networks available for them. These feelings make employees *postpone, indefinitely, very significant planned "milestone events" such as marriage, parenthood or the purchase of a house or car*. Employees would benefit greatly if assistance was provided in building the very simple yet necessary skill sets required for dealing with adequate work pace.

In Indecie's focus group, participants mentioned that *there is no delegation in the places where they work since they work in teams that are based on co-responsibility, team self-management, communication, cooperation, coordination, trust and commitment. The most productive and talent-based companies work in teams and if team members do not share tasks that leads to stress and mistakes*.

The negative consequences experienced by those who do not delegate are:

- Having to work weekends
- Negative impact on their work performance.

Some participants mentioned that *lack of delegation is usually due to poor communication within the company and lack of digital tools to communicate*.

List of enemies of the work pace

The participants in Romania chose the following as the most dangerous enemies:

- Fear to say no
- Lack of personal organization / planning
- Stress and lack of relaxation
- Time management
- Unawareness of multitasking as a system
- Emotional balance
- Low self-esteem
- Distractions and disorder
- Development of habits and routines
- Social Media distractions



- Lack of social networking
- Fall into the “helper” trap (always contributing to what others are doing and never asking others to contribute to what we’re doing)
- Workplace subjectivity

In the case of Poland, the experts were presented the following list of enemies:

- Time optimization: increasing flexibility
- Working from home by regulate teleworking
- Strengthening the resilience of workers
- Involving employees in decision-making
- Offering programmes for career development
- Promoting extrinsic as well as intrinsic motivation
- Decreasing collective stress at this time
- Equal treatment
- Diversity that builds creativity and innovation
- Openness to a different point of view
- Care for values
- Partnership and relationships
- Friendly work environment
- Taking action against the main factors of absenteeism: Stress, anxiety and depression
- Reducing multitasking practices

They chose **partnership and relationships**, **care for values** and **reducing multitasking practices** as the three most important factors.

In Slovenia, 85% of the participants chose “**fear of saying no**” and “**avoiding delegation**” as well as “**lack of personal organisation and planning**” as the most common enemies of efficient work. They also thought that dealing with time and developing habits and routines are common and listed other enemies in order from more to less common:

- Time management,
- Focusing and prioritising,
- Unawareness of multitasking as a system,
- Stress and lack of relaxation,
- Emotional balance.

None of the experts chose low self-esteem as one of the common enemies of the work pace.

In Ireland, the group regarded the list as quite complete but agreed that *the 12th enemy would be **productivity** given the either positive (good productivity) or negative impact (lack of productivity) on the employees and companies*. So the list would be as follows:

- Distractions and disorder
- Time management
- Emotional balance



- Fear of saying 'no'
- Avoiding delegation
- Stress and lack of relaxation
- Low self-esteem
- Focusing and prioritising
- Development of habits and routines
- Lack of personal organization / planning
- Unawareness of multitasking as a system
- Productivity

In Spain, *the data collected reveals that the most dangerous enemies for the members of the focus group are:*

- Distractions and disorder
- Stress and lack of relaxation
- Low self-esteem
- Lack of personal organisation and planning
- Development of negative habits and routines

These enemies were followed by “**avoiding delegation**”.

In contrast, the least dangerous are “time management”, “poor concentration and prioritisation” and “lack of knowledge of multitasking as a work tool”. Half of the participants thought that “emotional imbalance” and “fear of saying no” are dangerous enemies while the other half disagrees.

5 National conclusions

These are the conclusions of the focus groups held in each country.

Romania

The list of “enemies” of the work pace was the departure point for the discussion among the experts. Analyzing the overall interaction and information received during the national focus group the participants agreed on the following most dangerous enemies:

- Fear to say no
- Lack of personal organization / planning
- Stress and lack of relaxation
- Time management
- Unawareness of multitasking as a system



- Emotional balance
- Low self-esteem
- Distractions and disorder
- Development of habits and routines
- **Any others:**
- Social Media distractions
- Lack of social networking
- Fall into the “helper” trap (always contributing to what others are doing and never asking others to contribute to what we’re doing)
- Workplace subjectivity

Poland

When introducing the SLOW WORK concept to the organization, we should not simplify the fact that high pace causes stress, so slow work is the solution. The understanding presented by the Focus Group is rather MINDFUL MANAGEMENT, an attractive offer for people looking for meaning, mindfulness as well as good quality of work, services, and products.

Slow work should not be based on indicators of pace and productivity, but rather on returning to humanistic values in management such as authenticity, mindfulness and sensitivity at every level of cooperation.

Building an open and development-friendly work environment should be supported by specific tools and methods such as regular audits, tools supporting the self-assessment of the work performed, and solutions that systematically enforce the implementation of the agreed and developed solution from teams and leaders.

Slovenia

The participants were aware of the concept of slow work and all agree that using your time in a more meaningful and productive way as well as devoting your energy to focus on individual tasks is a necessary approach with a massive influence on a healthier work-life balance.

6 out of 7 participants have more or less found themselves or someone in their close vicinity suffering from the effects of an inadequate work pace in some stage of their lives.

According to the participants, consequences of inadequate work pace were as follow:

- Nervousness,



- Inability to sleep,
- Reduced quality of work,
- Neglect of private life,
- Anxiety.

For those who have not suffered from such consequences the secret lies in not working overtime and proper delegation of tasks.

The most common methods that the participants used in order to improve their approach to work were connected to avoiding distractions, physical activity, setting individual priorities, delegation of tasks, etc.

The participants chose the most common “enemies” of work pace, i.e. “*Fear of saying “no”*” and “*Avoiding delegation*” as well as the “*Lack of personal organization and planning*”.

Ireland

The slow-work concept is something we were never taught when starting our professional lives. It is a concept that is relatively unknown in organisations and businesses.

As the slow-work movement gains momentum, the following questions might arise: Is slow work compatible with real career success? Do you risk appearing lazy or unmotivated if you subscribe to that model of work?

As with most new things, it will probably take some time to adjust. When you give yourself the time and space to take a step back and properly focus on your work, you might find that you are happier, healthier, and far more effective.

Spain

1. Most people know about the **concept of slow work** and agree that in order to be more productive a change needs to be made in companies and workplaces. They agree that **the implementation of slow work would reduce stress and increase concentration, creativity and the well-being of workers.**

2. The negative effects of an inadequate work pace are common knowledge. Mental and physical problems arise when workers do not have tools to cope with problems at work. Stress, frustration, insomnia, loss of concentration and attention, confusion, forgetfulness, mental blocks, anxiety, depression and several disorders are the problems mentioned by the participants in the Focus Group. Companies should invest time and resources in new ideas that make the workers happier in the long term instead of following traditional models of



productivity because some **people are not aware of the negative effects of a fast work pace** and have the feeling that being stressed means being more productive.

3. **Leaders should set example** in their companies so that employees are motivated and see the benefits of good habits. **Leaders should show employees from the beginning that organisation and commitment to their tasks is superior to multitasking.** This way, employees would be more productive from the onset.

4. The **most common deficiencies** are the difficulty for workers to adapt to new procedures, lack of flexibility, change and time management, organisation, prioritisation and soft skills. Companies often fail to allocate tasks and jobs; do not recognise work performance; do not introduce improvements in performance-enhancing procedures; do not train their employees so they can update their job skills and link incentives to workload.

5. The world of work is constantly changing and **more training is needed** for both leaders and workers. With the right training, leaders will know how to set goals for their workers efficiently and workers will learn how to use the latest tools and techniques to do their jobs in the most effective way. We must not forget **soft skills training** for leaders and employees. They are very important in order to lead teams, communicate and interact with others and create trust.

6. Leaders and workers need **good organisation and prioritise** the most urgent tasks. To that end, they need to **avoid multitasking** and commit to a task trying to avoid distractions and interruptions. A good way to get organised is to be realistic about the tasks you have to do and what you can do in a working day giving double the time to the tasks that need to be done to be sure that you will spend the time required on them.

7. It is important to **make employees feel valued** and not to link incentives to workload but to excellence, creativity, talent and added value of the employees. Companies can pay attention to what their workers need and offer incentives such as reduced working hours and work-life balance.

8. After periods of intense concentration, people need to rest in order to recover. **Five or ten-minute breaks every 40 minutes** help to maintain concentration. When workers get used to



working in 40-minute time slots, they are more productive because they avoid distractions and postpone things unrelated to the task at hand until the break or the next time slot.

9. The new working models do not need to delegate because they work in teams. These models are more productive because the team is self-regulated and based on co-responsibility, cooperation, coordination, trust and commitment. They depend on very good communication among their members to make everything work. In the workplaces where delegation is necessary, **failure to delegate can have negative consequences**. For example, some workers might have to work weekends due to extra work that another worker could have done. Poor communication or lack of the adequate digital tools to communicate is usually the reason why workers do not delegate. With the right communication and organisation, delegating is an easy task to carry out and has the benefit of increased productivity.

10. The **work rate management's main enemies** are:

- Distractions and disorder
- Stress and lack of relaxation
- Low self-esteem
- Lack of personal organisation and planning
- Development of negative habits and routines

All these enemies could be mitigated if leaders implemented slow work and workers learnt that it is possible to work in a pleasant way. By getting organised workers will increase concentration and avoid distractions and negative habits at work. This will result in better performance which will boost their self-esteem.

6 Summing up

After analysing the results of the focus groups carried out by each partner, the following conclusions were reached:

1. Slow work is a concept that is familiar to most entrepreneurs, managers and employees but which is not successfully implemented in companies due to lack of knowledge. The implementation of slow work is necessary to help employees use their



time in a more meaningful and productive way as well as devoting their energy to focus on individual tasks. This would result in healthier work-life balance.

2. As indicated in the focus group in Poland, slow work is not only about working slower to reduce stress. It is also about mindful management which is *an attractive offer for people looking for meaning and mindfulness as well as good quality of work, services, and products*. In the Irish focus group they reached the conclusion that *it will probably take some time to adjust but when you give yourself the time and space to take a step back and properly focus on your work, you might find that you are happier, healthier, and far more effective*.
3. To implement this concept in companies, specific tools and methods are necessary such as regular audits, tools supporting the self-assessment of the work performed, and solutions that systematically enforce the implementation of the agreed and developed solution from teams and leaders.
4. As revealed in the Spanish focus group, *leaders should set example in their companies so that employees are motivated and see the benefits of good habits. Leaders should show employees from the beginning that organisation and commitment to their tasks is superior to multitasking. This way, employees would be more productive from the onset*.
5. As participants in Slovenia highlighted, employers and employees should be aware of the problems caused by an inadequate work pace. The patterns of behaviour that led to that situation should be changed.
6. Among the consequences of inadequate work pace we find:
 - Nervousness,
 - Inability to sleep,
 - Reduced quality of work,
 - Neglect of private life,
 - Anxiety
 - Depression
 - Stress
 - Loss of concentration
 - Forgetfulness
 - Mental blocks
 - Reduced quality of the work done
 - Tasks left undone
 - Tasks needed to be checked several times and corrections made
 - Increase of accidents
 - Poor decision making
 - Dropping out of work
 - Increased absenteeism
 - Negative impact on productivity
 - Fear of being criticized by the manager and the colleagues for having a slower work style
 - Burnout symptoms
 - Cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, endocrine and muscular disorders
 - Back pain
 - Headaches
7. Good organisation and prioritisation are important. To that end, employees need to avoid multitasking and commit to a task trying to avoid distractions and interruptions. A good way to get organised is to be realistic about the tasks you have to do and what you can do in a working day giving double the time to the tasks that need to be done to be sure that you will spend the time required on them.



8. Breaks are important in order to maintain concentration. Five or ten minute breaks every 40 minutes make workers be more productive because they avoid distractions.
9. Team work is more productive since it is self-regulated and based on co-responsibility, cooperation, coordination, trust and commitment but when this is not possible delegation is essential. Managers fail to delegate appropriately due to lack of communication or digital tools to communicate. When this happens, some workers have to work on weekends due to extra work that another worker could have done. With the right communication, managers will have the benefits of increased productivity.
10. The most common enemies of the work pace chosen by the participants in the focus groups are:
 1. Fear to say no
 2. Lack of personal organization / planning
 3. Stress and lack of relaxation
 4. Time management
 5. Unawareness of multitasking as a system
 6. Emotional balance
 7. Low self-esteem
 8. Distractions and disorder
 9. Development of habits and routines
 10. Social Media distractions (added by **CPIP**)
 11. Lack of social networking (added by **CPIP**)
 12. Fall into the “helper” trap (always contributing to what others are doing and never asking others to contribute to what we’re doing) (added by **CPIP**)
 13. Workplace subjectivity
 14. Avoiding delegation
 15. Partnership and relationships (added by **Orange Hill**)
 16. Care for values (added by **Orange Hill**)
 17. Reducing multitasking practices (added by **Orange Hill**)
 18. Productivity (added by **I&F**)

The objective is to choose the 12 most important enemies to help companies improve their productivity and the well-being of employees.



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