



IOE Position Paper on Remote Work beyond COVID-19

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

August 2021



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This paper explores different aspects of remote work and how it may impact the way we work after the pandemic. It examines the needs, challenges, and opportunities based on an assessment of teleworking regulations in 30 selected countries and the EU.

In particular, **working time** is one of the major concerns in policy debates. The existing international standards for “fixed” working time to allow for resting periods and to prevent health risks no longer respond to the current demand for more flexibility. Some countries have adopted regulations that allow a more flexible and balanced approach to working time without hindering the right of workers to rest or adversely impact their health.

Other aspects identified in this paper are **skills demands** and **technology**. These are important to enable the workforce to achieve productivity, as well as address issues concerning employers’ obligations and workers’ responsibility on security and data protection.

Furthermore, **digital divide** highlights that teleworking is not suitable for every sector, industry or country. However, the fast pace of expanding access to internet makes it an issue which must be considered, even in countries and regions where accessibility is more limited.

Occupational safety and health (OSH) is singled out as an important aspect of remote work concerning questions on liability and compensation. The fact that employers have limited control over the preventive and security measures taken in a working environment other than the normal workplace, represents some challenges to OSH compliance, as well as highlights the importance of creating a positive and healthy working culture and the need to clearly define what are the responsibilities and liabilities for employers. In addition, teleworking may involve psychosocial risks, linked to working alone and the possibility of blurring of personal and work life, which need to be properly managed. Some examples of countries providing for OSH specific standards in remote work are included for consideration.

Cross border mobility aspects derived from situations where the teleworker and the employer are based in different countries, draw attention to the application of labour and tax laws across jurisdictions.

The **associated economic costs** of teleworking are also examined through an assessment of the benefits of reducing the commuting time, the costs for the workforce associated to working from home, as well as a wide range of benefits for employers like possible reduction of the office space. In addition, many questions are raised such as whether costs associated to remote work shall be covered by the employer or if these are transferred in full or partially to the worker. The considerations around the economic burdens can vary depending on the nature of remote work, whether the working relationship has been agreed as such from the beginning, or if it is provided as a benefit for the workforce; whether is mandated by the employer or agreed bilaterally. The approach taken in various jurisdictions is brought for analysis and the paper calls for more clarity on the related costs of teleworking and calls for parties to find and agree on a fair and efficient balance between costs and benefits.

The impact on **productivity** due to external factors at home is leading the discussions on the policy needs and implications of remote working modalities. The paper refers to the findings of various surveys.

Moreover, this paper looks at the limitations, challenges and opportunities of remote work and telework from a gender, diversity and inclusion perspective, acknowledging that the use of digital technologies and data, on the one hand has certain limitations and on the other, it can offer new opportunities. The positive impact on inclusion has been recognized by some jurisdictions and used as a tool to foster employability of people with family responsibilities.

Finally, this paper highlights the **role of the IOE** in supporting its members in developing remote work-related policy and offers some policy recommendations on a range of topics identified above for policy makers and employers' organisations to consider.