

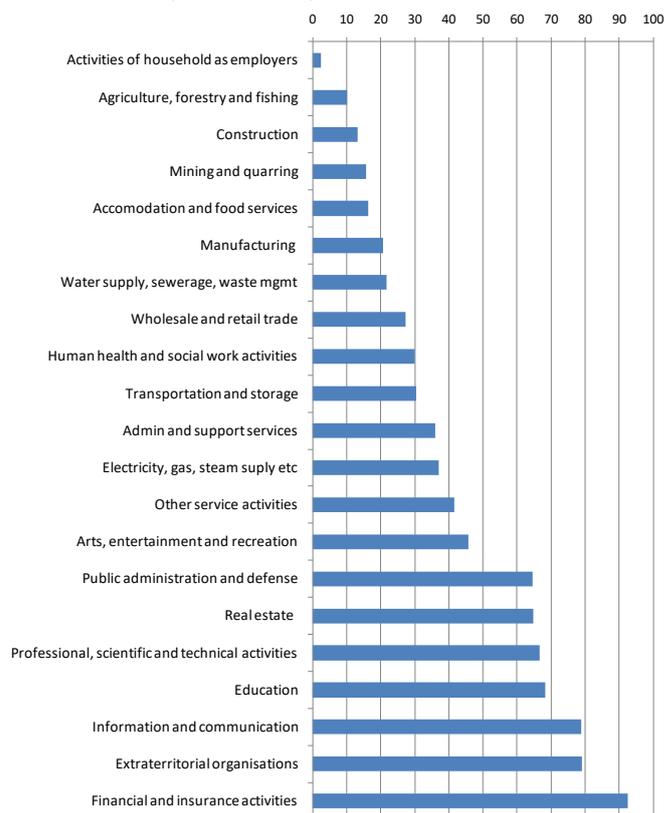
HOW TO GET THE BEST OUT OF TELEWORKING

Workplace-tailored solutions are key



- Telework offers win-win solutions, as it makes it possible for employers to organise work in a way that best meets the objectives of their business and for employees to better combine work and private life.
- Social dialogue at company level is a vital means of dealing with teleworking arrangements, allowing tailored measures for the variety of businesses and jobs.
- Teleworking is comprehensively covered by the existing legislation and EU-level framework agreements between the social partners.
- While the pandemic boosted teleworking for health reasons, teleworking is a voluntary and reversible working method, based on mutual agreement.
- Well-functioning digital connections and proper skills are a prerequisite for teleworking and require investment in infrastructure and in education and training.
- Sufficient and diverse care services are also essential enablers of efficient teleworking, while also contributing to work-life balance.
- To grasp the opportunities of teleworking in a gender-equal way, work and family roles need to be lived beyond gender stereotypes.

Teleworkability in EU27 by sector



Source: Sostero M., Milasi S., Hurley J., Fernández-Macías E., Bisello M. (2020), "Teleworkability and the COVID-19 crisis: a new digital divide?", JRC Working Papers on Labour, Education and Technology 2020-05, Joint Research Centre (Seville site). Note: Employees only. % of employment by sector.

Business-specific solutions – supported by enabling infrastructure

Telework has to be tailored to the needs of the respective business. Considering the wide variety of workplaces, conditions for telework can be best shaped at enterprise level, making use of social dialogue. To enable effective teleworking, investment is needed in digital infrastructure, innovation, education, and care services.

Teleworking has increased with the digitalisation of the economy and society, and the COVID-19 pandemic substantially accelerated this trend. More than one third of employees have been working solely from home. Before the pandemic, less than 5 % of employees were working from home regularly and less than 10 % occasionally.

While teleworking under the pandemic conditions was driven by the health protection imperative, the need for and opportunities of teleworking in normal times stem from the nature of business and work in question. Not all jobs or tasks can be accomplished remotely. However, over time it is likely that more and more tasks will become “teleworkable”, given that an increasing proportion of work is done using digital tools, robots and AI.

Telework provides opportunities for both employers and employees. It may contribute to higher employment and participation in the labour market, save costs and increase flexibility and productivity, and may provide improved work-life balance and well-being at work.

At the same time, there are prerequisites that need to be met. Teleworking requires proper digital skills, as well as skills in adopting diverse management and working methods. Teleworking presupposes an organisational culture that rests on trust, flexibility and resilience. While providing more flexibility, it calls for responsibility and a firm commitment to strive for results.

Social dialogue is a vital mechanism for addressing the issues that arise with teleworking. Given the wide variety of workplaces and situations, social dialogue at enterprise level makes it possible to meet these specific and diverse needs.



KEY QUESTIONS FOR CHECKING TELEWORKING PRACTICES

While exiting from the pandemic situation, it may be useful for enterprises to check the feasibility of their teleworking practices, by asking for example:

- Is it clear how much, when and on what terms telework can be done?
- How are proper teleworking tools and working conditions, including health and safety ensured?
- How can the equality, inclusion and togetherness of personnel be enhanced?
- Is there a need for workplace rules on teleworking – either joint ones or rules tailored to individual employees?

Teleworking is comprehensively covered by existing legislation regarding working times, health and safety, anti-discrimination and work-life balance. In addition, there are EU-level framework agreements by the social partners that specifically deal with teleworking. Agreements are being implemented at national, sectoral and company level in various ways.

To enable and encourage businesses to invest in new working methods, the EU and its Member States must ensure a favourable business environment and help to establish good teleworking conditions through investment in digital infrastructure, education and training, and research and innovation. Specific efforts need to be focused on supporting the digitalisation measures of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

Telework – like any other form of work – must be organised in a way that ensures full compliance with the principle of non-discrimination. Special attention needs to be paid to gender equality. Teleworking arrangements should promote equality between women and men with respect to training, work-life balance, and career development.

Effective and productive teleworking also requires the availability of sufficient and diverse care services – including for children and the elderly. This is a prerequisite for both men and women to be able to fully participate in the labour market – irrespective of where the work is done.

Stereotypes are a significant reason for the segregation of jobs and tasks between women and men and thus partly define who can work remotely. Family roles often stem from stereotypical thinking as well. To make maximum use of both women and men in the economy and society, it is necessary to raise awareness of the implications for career equality of choices in relation to studies, professions and jobs.

TO BE AVOIDED

Seizing the opportunities of teleworking must not be hindered by:

- introducing restrictive and rigid regulation, which discourages innovation and hampers workplace and sector-specific solutions;
- not respecting the autonomy of the social partners and the prerogative of employers in seeking the best practical arrangements.