



European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

Place of work and working conditions

Introduction

EU-level initiatives

Incidence of working away from workplace

Health and safety

Work organisation

Working time and work–life balance

Other issues

Commentary

References

This report is available in electronic format only.

This report focuses on the working conditions of EU workers who may have more than one place of work. It examines the range of health and safety risks facing these workers and also considers issues surrounding the organisation of work. These include autonomy and supervision issues, potential problems stemming from isolation of workers who work away from their colleagues and effects on job demands and the pace of work. The report also investigates issues surrounding working time and work–life balance for these workers, including flexibility in the organisation of work, impact on working time, and the potential for the blurring of boundaries between private life and working life in the case of those who work at home.

Introduction

The incidence of employees working away from their employer's premises covers a wide range of working practices. It encompasses workers who, by the nature of their work, regularly carry out their duties at a variety of locations away from the employer's premises, such as construction workers, drivers and care workers. It also includes workers whose normal place of work would be an office at their employer's premises, but who, for a range of reasons, work remotely from that office some or all of the time. This latter group of workers can be broken down into those who do not use any form of information technology (IT) to help them work, and so-called teleworkers, who use technology such as telephones, computers, email, the internet and virtual private network arrangements, which allow them to connect remotely to their company's network. In some countries, the incidence of [telework](#) has increased significantly over the past decade, boosted by the development of new technologies that allow employees to work remotely. However, it should be noted that the number of full-time teleworkers remains relatively small as a proportion of the overall workforce.

EU-level initiatives

Multi-sector initiatives

In 2001, the European Commission invited the EU-level cross-sector social partners to begin negotiations towards an EU-level [multi-sector agreement](#) on the issue of telework. The social partners involved included: the [European Trade Union Confederation \(ETUC\)](#), with the liaison committee for managerial and professional staff, which brings together the ETUC-affiliated [Council of European Professional and Managerial Staff \(Eurocadres\)](#) and the independent [European Confederation of Executives and Managerial Staff \(CEC\)](#); the [Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe \(UNICE\)](#), in cooperation with the European Association of Craft and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises ([Union Européenne de l'artisanat et des petites et moyennes entreprises, UEAPME](#)); and the [European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General Economic Interest \(CEEP\)](#). This invitation was issued within the framework of a second-stage social partner consultation on modernising and improving employment relations. Negotiations began in October 2001 ([EU0111102N](#)) and an EU multi-sector [framework agreement on telework \(109Kb PDF\)](#) was signed in July 2002 ([EU0207204F](#)).

This EU multi-sector agreement is voluntary and aims to establish a general framework at European level that can be implemented by the signatory parties and their member organisations in accordance with national procedures and practices. It defines telework as 'a form of organising and/or performing work, using information technology, where work, which could also be performed at the employer's premises, is carried out away from those premises on a regular basis'. The agreement covers issues such as the nature of telework, the employment conditions of teleworkers, data protection, privacy issues for teleworkers, equipment, [health and safety](#), organisation of work, training and collective rights.

A [report on the implementation of this agreement \(1.4Mb PDF\)](#) was adopted by the social dialogue committee on 28 June 2006. This report found that, as at June 2006, the agreement had been implemented in a majority of EU Member States and countries in the European Economic Area (EEA), although it was not fully completed in Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovenia. Bulgaria and Romania, which joined the EU on 1 January 2007, had – as at June 2006 – expressed an interest in following the agreement. The report found that the tools and procedures of implementation chosen by the social partners varied in accordance with national practices, ranging from social partner agreements in Spain, collective agreements in France, a joint recommendation in the Netherlands to implementation measures involving public authorities, which was the case in the UK. The signatory parties to the EU-level agreement state that the report ‘clearly demonstrates the wealth of social partner initiatives to follow on the EU framework agreement on telework’ and that the reporting exercise ‘shows the heterogeneity both in reporting and implementation. This is partly due to the fact that it is the first time that member organisations have had to do this. It is also partly due to the novelty of the issue itself and partly due to the diversity of industrial relations systems’.

EU sector-level initiatives

Teleworking has also been the subject of three sectoral EU-level agreements, in the form of guidelines. The first agreement was negotiated in February 2001 in the [telecommunications sector \(52Kb PDF\) \(EU0102296F\)](#), the second was negotiated in April 2001 in the [commerce sector \(35Kb PDF\) \(EU0105214F\)](#) and the third was adopted in November 2002 in the [electricity sector \(71Kb PDF\)](#).

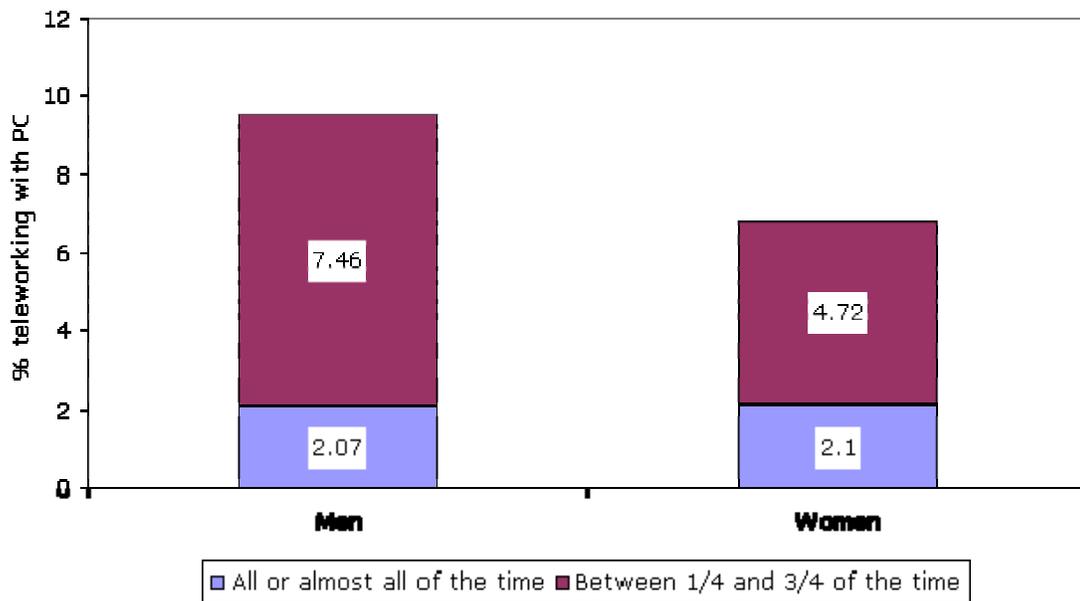
Incidence of working away from workplace

EU level

One of the main sources of comparable EU-wide data on working away from the normal place of work is the [Fourth European Working Conditions Survey \(EWCS\)](#), 2005, which shows that only 50% of the working population in the EU work at their place of work all of the time and that a total of 21% never work at their workplace. Furthermore, 9% of workers always work in locations that are outside the home and the company premises, while 60% never do. Some 1% of workers always work at home with a personal computer (PC), while 84% never do, and 2% always work at home without a PC, while 79% never do.

According to data from the EWCS, only 2.07% of male and 2.1% of female respondents stated in 2005 that their main job involved working at home with a PC all or almost all of the time (Figure 1). A further 7.46% of men and 4.72% of women reported that their main job involved working at home with a PC for between one quarter and three quarters of the time.

Figure 1: Figure 1: Main job involves teleworking from home with PC (%)

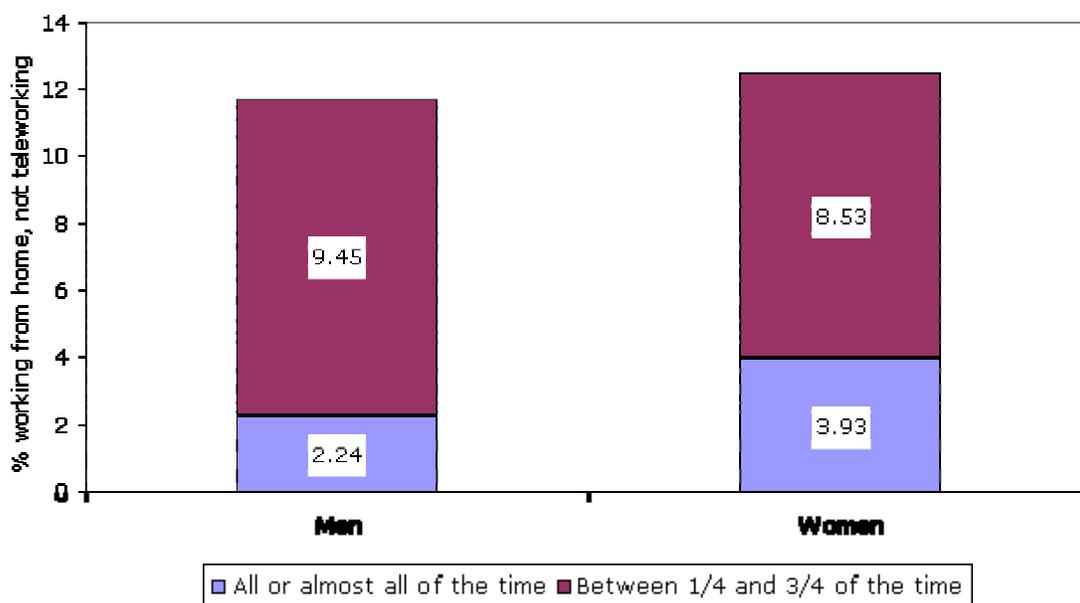


Main job involves teleworking from home with PC

Source: EWCS, 2005

When respondents were asked whether their main job involved working at home, excluding telework, 2.24% of men and 3.93% of women stated that it did all or almost all of the time (Figure 2). A further 9.45% of men and 8.53% of women reported that it did between one quarter and three quarters of the time.

Figure 2: Figure 2: Main job involves working at home, excluding telework (%)



Main job involves working at home, excluding telework

Source: EWCS, 2005

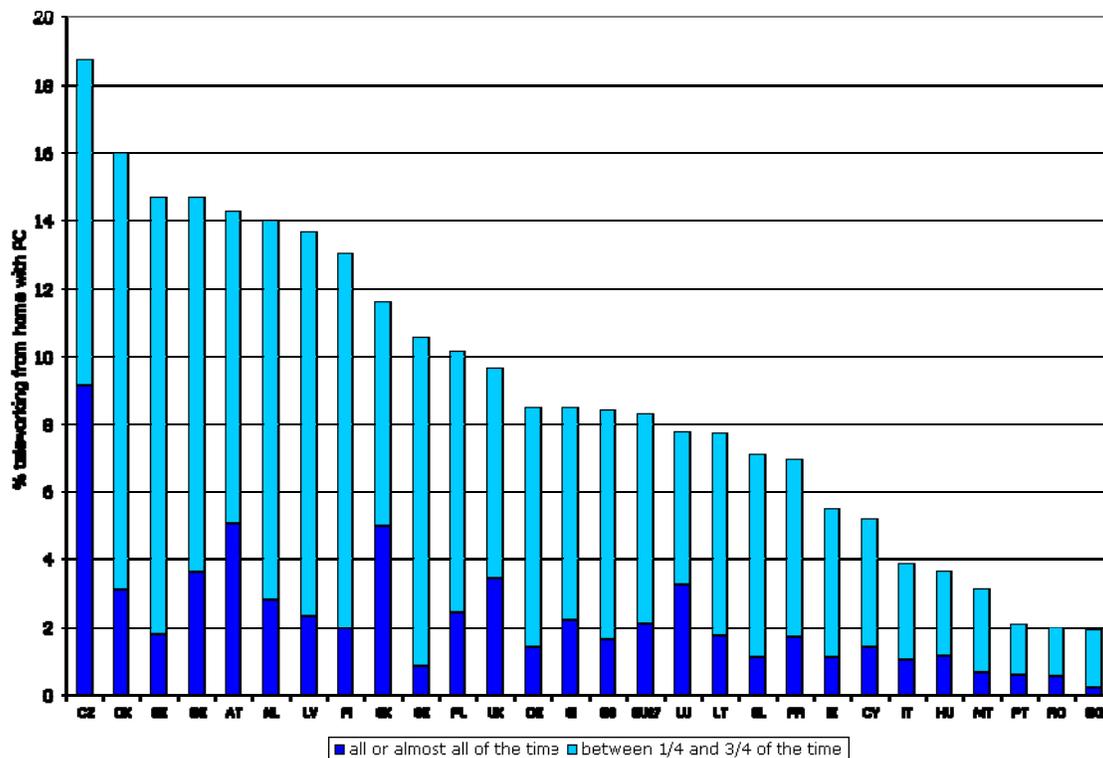
National level

Measuring the incidence of working away from the place of work and comparing it across countries is problematic, due to different types of analyses used. A distinction also needs to be drawn between the incidence of full-time teleworking, which remains low in the majority of countries, and the incidence of part-time teleworking, which is usually more prevalent than full-time teleworking. Overall, it is clear that considerable variations emerge between the European countries examined in this survey.

According to the EWCS 2005, the incidence of working at home – both with a PC and not teleworking – varies substantially from country to country (Figure 3). The country with the highest number of respondents teleworking all or almost all of the time from home with a PC was the Czech Republic, at 9.11%, followed by Austria, at 5.05%, and Slovakia, at 4.97%. The countries with the lowest number of respondents teleworking all or almost all of the time from home with a PC were Bulgaria, at 0.17%, Romania, at 0.51%, and Portugal, at 0.55%.

The country with the highest number of respondents teleworking between one quarter and three quarters of the time from home with a PC was Estonia, at 12.92%, followed by Denmark, at 12.91%, and Latvia, at 11.35%. The countries with the lowest number of respondents teleworking between one quarter and three quarters of the time from home with a PC were Romania, at 1.48%, Portugal, at 1.53%, and Bulgaria, at 1.77%.

Figure 3: Main job involves teleworking from home with PC, by country



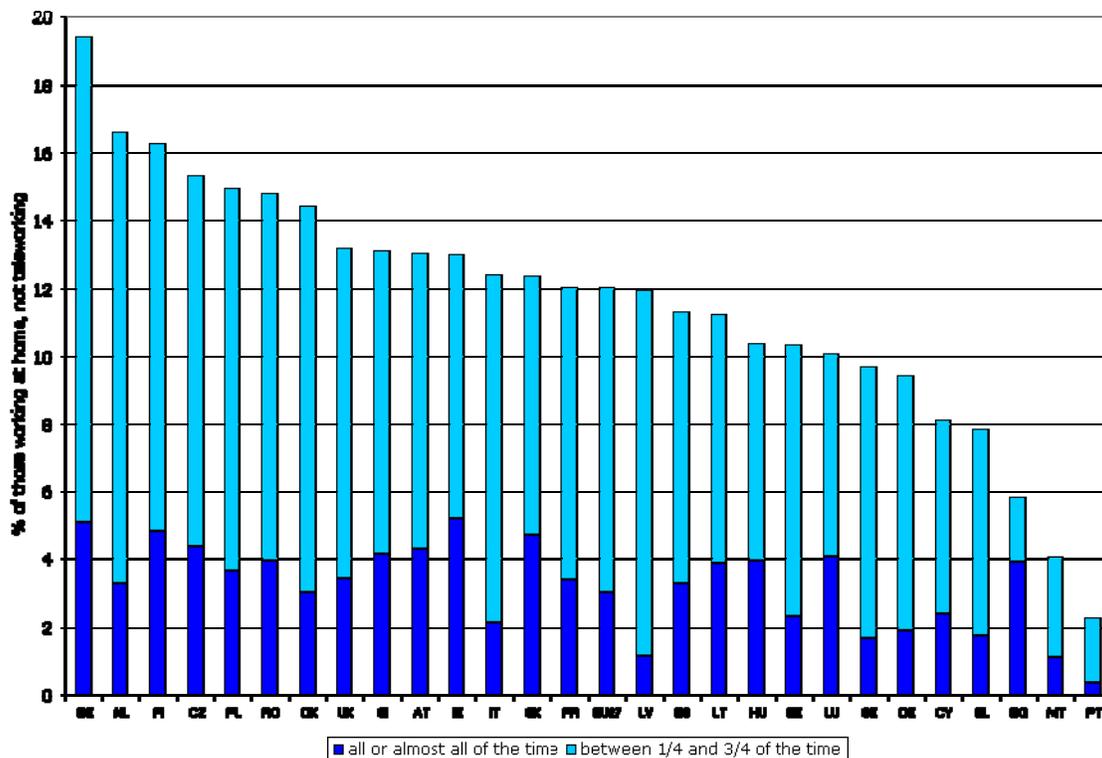
Main job involves teleworking from home with PC, by country

Source: EWCS, 2005

Respondents were also asked whether they worked at home, excluding teleworking (Figure 4). The country with the highest number of respondents who stated that they did such work all of the time or almost all of the time was Ireland, at 5.2%, followed by Belgium, at 5.07%, and Finland, at 4.83%. The countries with the lowest number of respondents who reported that they did such work all or almost all of the time were Portugal, at 0.32%, Malta, at 1.10%, and Latvia, at 1.16%.

The country with the highest number of respondents citing that they worked at home, excluding teleworking, for between one quarter and three quarters of the time was Belgium, at 14.32%, followed by the Netherlands, at 13.3%, and Denmark, at 11.46%. The countries with the lowest number of respondents stating that they worked at home excluding teleworking for between one quarter and three quarters of the time were Bulgaria, at 1.91%, Portugal, at 1.95%, and Malta, at 2.95%.

Figure 4: Figure 4: Main job involves working at home, excluding telework, by country



Main job involves working at home, excluding telework, by country

Source: EWCS, 2005

The national correspondents of the [European Working Conditions Observatory](#) (EWCS) contributing to this comparative analysis on place of work also provided data where possible. In some countries, such as Austria, the incidence of working away from the normal place of work is relatively low: only around 1.6% of all employees and self-employed people work from home on a PC for at least eight hours a week, transmitting their work to the company by data transmission lines, telephone and fax. In the Czech Republic too, working away from the place of work in the case of workers who are normally office-based remains the exception. In Belgium, according to data based on commuting patterns, around 83% of employees work most of the time at their employer's place of work. Of the remaining 17%, it may be presumed that most employees work at external locations or on the road, while a small proportion may work at home. In Hungary and Italy, the incidence of working at home is also low, at 2% and 2.2%, respectively.

Nevertheless, the incidence of working at home is higher in some countries. For example, in Finland in 2003, some 31% of employees worked at home at least occasionally or partly. However, only 15% of Finnish employees worked solely at home. In Denmark, 24% of employees work usually or sometimes from home while, in the Netherlands, 23% of employees carry out part of their job at home. In Estonia, 9.4% of employees worked at home in 2005, and 5.4% of employees teleworked. In France, 7% of workers are estimated to be teleworkers.

Sector

In terms of sector, employees working away from the normal place of work tend to be concentrated in certain sectors. These include the construction sector, agriculture, home care (care of elderly or sick people), real estate and transport. In terms of people who telework or work from

home, a large number tend to work in the IT, financial or business and services sectors, where access to IT is high.

The results of the EWCS 2005 largely support these findings, showing that people were most likely to telework with a PC in their main job all or almost all of the time in the real estate sector, at 5.03%, followed by the financial services sector, at 3.89%. People were most likely to telework with a PC in their main job between one quarter and three quarters of the time in real estate (14.16%) and education (12.37%).

The sectors where people were the least likely to telework with a PC in their main job all or almost all of the time were agriculture and fishing, at 0.38%, and hotels and restaurants, at 0.65%. The sectors where people were the least likely to telework with a PC in their main job between one quarter and three quarters of the time were agriculture and fishing (1.57%) and electricity, gas and water supply (3.2%).

Gender

In terms of gender, in the majority of countries where data were available, men were slightly or considerably more likely than women to telework or work at home. The exceptions to this – where women were more likely than men to work at home or to telework – were the Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Italy, Romania, Slovenia and Spain. In Germany, according to micro census data from 2005, full-time women were slightly more likely to work mainly from home (1.92% compared with 1.4%), although full-time men were slightly more likely to work sometimes from home (7.67% compared with 6.8%).

Age

In terms of age, a very mixed picture emerges. In some countries, there appears to be a concentration of teleworkers and homeworkers in the middle age groups (30 to 44 years), with the incidence declining with age. This is the case in Austria, Slovakia and also in Finland and the Netherlands (35–44 year age group). In Spain, the vast majority (87%) of teleworkers are in the 25–40 year age group.

However, in some countries, such as Bulgaria, teleworkers tend to be younger, in the under-35 year age group.

Conversely, in some countries, older workers – those aged 55 to 65 years – are more likely to work at home, possibly as a result of initiatives to promote the inclusion of older age groups. For example, older workers are more likely to work at home in the Czech Republic. In Estonia too, the incidence of working at home appears to increase with age. In Greece, the incidence of working at home increases with age in the case of men, but peaks in the 30–44 year age group in the case of women. In Romania, workers over the age of 50 years are most likely to work away from the normal place of work. In the UK, teleworking is more common – and is growing at a faster rate – among workers aged over 50 years and is least common among workers aged less than 24 years.

Educational level

In the majority of countries, teleworkers and people working at home are more likely to be educated to a comparatively high level and are commonly managers and professionals. In Estonia, workers with tertiary education are more likely to telework. In the Netherlands, Spain and Slovakia, it has been found that the incidence of teleworking increases according to educational level.

Nevertheless, in Germany, the majority of workers working in multi-locational jobs do not have an academic degree, according to 2002 data.

Workers who work in the manufacturing sector and perform manual work at home tend to have lower educational levels. For example, in the Czech Republic, low levels of education are prevalent in the case of women who perform small-scale manual work from home.

Occupation

In terms of white-collar homeworkers and teleworkers, this category overlaps to some extent with the previous category of educational level. Using the [International Standard Classification of Occupations \(ISCO\)](#), in general, senior managers, managers and professionals are more likely to work at home and to telework than other occupational categories of worker are.

In terms of employee status – that is, being an employee or self-employed – a mixed picture emerges across the countries studied. In Austria, employees are more likely to telework, whereas in countries such as the UK, Denmark, Bulgaria and Estonia, teleworkers are more likely to be self-employed.

According to data from the EWCS 2005, professionals were most likely to telework at home using a PC all or almost all of the time (4.43%), followed by legislators, senior officials and managers (3.3%). Professionals were also most likely to telework at home using a PC between one quarter and three quarters of the time (14.61%), followed by legislators, senior officials and managers (12.21%).

The types of employees least likely to telework at home using a PC all or almost all of the time were those in elementary occupations (0.43%), followed by plant and machine operators and assemblers (0.54%). The types of employees least likely to telework at home using a PC for between one quarter and three quarters of the time were skilled agriculture and fishery workers (0.73%), followed by plant and machine operators and assemblers (1.73%).

Trends

Evidence suggests that the incidence of working away from the place of work and of teleworking is increasing. In percentage terms, workers are more likely to work away from the workplace than they are to telework.

In Austria, the number of teleworkers rose from 21,800 personnel in 1997 to 57,800 in 2000, defined as those who work at least eight hours a week from home on a PC. In Portugal, the incidence of teleworking increased from 0.6% of the working population in 1994 to 2.2% by 1998–1999. In the UK, the proportion of teleworkers (defined as those who work mainly in their own home or mainly in different places using home as a base, who use both a telephone and a computer to carry out their work at home) rose from 4% of the workforce in 1997 to 8% in 2005.

In terms of homeworking, in Denmark, the number of employees working from home increased from 20% to 24% between 2000 and 2005, according to [Statistics Denmark \(Danmarks Statistik\)](#). Likewise, in Finland, the proportion of employees working at home at least occasionally or partly increased from 26% in 1990 to 31% in 1997, remaining at 31% in 2003.

In the new EU Member States, working away from the main workplace has increased over the past decade, following restructuring and the development of the IT and services sectors. This has been the case in Hungary since the early 1990s, with the proportion of people working at premises other than the company premises increasing from 1.3% in 2002 to 2% by 2004. In Poland, although no accurate data are available, the incidence of working away from the workplace is estimated to have increased significantly over the past decade.

In some countries, however, the trend has been downward. In Germany, according to a 2002 study, the percentage of workers working away from the employer's premises declined from 6% in 1993 to 3% in 1997 in western Germany and from 8% to 5% in eastern Germany.

The following table summarises data on the incidence of working away from the place of work. The level of detail of the data varies from country to country, resulting in some blank boxes. The date of surveys referred to also varies, as do national measures and definitions of what constitutes workers who work away from the workplace.

Incidence of working away from workplace, based on national data

Incidence of working away from workplace, based on national data

	Incidence	Main sectors	Gender	Age	Educational level	Employment status
AT	1.6% of all employees and self-employed people (those teleworking for at least eight hours a week)	Services sector (75%–80%). 21% of services-sector workers telework for at least eight hours a week	76.8% male and 23.2% female (those teleworking for at least eight hours a week)	More than 50% of all teleworkers are aged between 30 and 44 years. The share of teleworkers decreases with age	Two thirds of all teleworkers have either a high school diploma or a college or university degree	74% of those teleworking for at least eight hours a week are employees
BE	83% of employees work most of the time at the employer's premises. 10% of the workforce is engaged in telework	Construction industry, home care workers, temporary workers and those performing telework	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
BG	Data not available	Accounting services to small and micro-enterprises (8%), researchers (12%), software development specialists (30%)	Data not available	Most teleworking takes place among the 18–35 year age group	Data not available	Teleworking and working away from the workplace is particularly prevalent among self-employed people such as analysts, freelance architects, translators

						and journalists
CY	In 2005, 2,620 people usually worked from home, 548 people sometimes worked from home and the majority, 344,863, never worked from home	The highest incidences of people working from home in 2005 were found in manufacturing, wholesale, retail trade and repair, services, and real estate and business activities. In addition, an increase has been found over the past five years in the number of physical therapists, occupational therapists and accountants working away from the workplace	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
CZ	According to data from 2001, 4.7% of employees worked from home, 4% combined working from home with working elsewhere, 41% worked within a different locality to which they	Working away from the workplace is most common in sectors such as real estate, wholesale and retail trade, and financial services (excluding insurance and pensions)	According to data from 2001, 4.6% of men and 4.9% of women worked from home	Working at home was most common in the 55–65 year age group (6% according to 2001 data), followed by the 25–34 year age group (5.5%). The incidence of those combining	Low levels of education are prevalent in the case of women who perform small-scale manual work from home. Specialists and managers who work from home have higher levels of education	According to the PriceWaterhouseCoopers PayWell survey 2005, specialists in 15% of enterprises could combine work in the office with work from home. This fell to 13% of companies in the case of senior

	commute, 0.3% worked abroad and 5.1% worked in differing places			working at home and elsewhere was 5.1% in the 55–65 year age group and 5% in the 35–44 year age group		managers and 10% in the case of middle management and sales staff
DE	In total, 31.8% of employees in Germany are mobile workers, spending some paid working time away from their company's premises. 16.3% of employees spend more than 10 hours of paid working time per week away from their company's premises and 5.7% are mobile teleworkers (2002 data)	Working at home is most prevalent in the community, social and personal services sector (3.3% work mainly at home and 13% sometimes at home). In the real estate, renting and business activities sector, 2.5% work mainly at home and 11% sometimes at home (2005 figures)	According to micro census data from 2005, full-time women are slightly more likely to work mainly from home (1.92% compared with 1.4% for men), although full-time men are slightly more likely to work sometimes from home (7.67% compared with 6.8% for women). Female civil servants are most likely to work from home (9.3% mainly and 35.2% sometimes)	Data not available	The majority of workers working in multi-locational jobs do not have an academic degree, according to 2002 data	Civil servants are most likely to work at home (6.2% mainly and 24.2% sometimes). 2% of white-collar workers work mainly at home and 8.1% sometimes at home, while 0.8% of blue-collar workers work mainly at home and 0.4% sometimes at home
DK	24% of employees worked usually or	Working from home is most prevalent in	The labour force survey shows that men are far	Data not available	Working from home is particularly prevalent	Working from home is most widespread

	sometimes from home in 2005, according to the Danish labour force survey	the education and research sector (38%)	more likely to work from home, although a different survey (DWECS 2000, DK0312SR01) shows that women were slightly more likely than men to work at home		among professionals, teachers and managers. Around 60% of these employees state that they work from home, compared with only 6% of employees with vocational or no education	among primary and lower secondary school teachers, followed by self-employed workers in services
EE	9.4% of employees worked at home in 2005, and 5.4% of employees teleworked, according to the Estonian labour force survey	The highest incidence of working at home is in the education sector (18.6% in 2005). The highest incidence of teleworking is in the real estate, renting and business activities sector (11.7% in 2004)	Overall, men are slightly more likely than women to work at home (9.9% of all employees compared with 9.8% for men). However, female employees are more likely to work at home (7.4% compared with 5.9% for male employees). Men are more likely to telework than women are (5.3% compared with 3.3% in 2004)	The incidence of working at home appears to increase with age – 6.8% in the 15–24 year age group, 10.2% in the 25–54 year age group and 10.3% in the 55–74 year age group	Workers with tertiary education were more likely to telework, at 7.5%, according to the 2004 labour force survey, compared with 2.9% of workers with upper secondary education and 1.3% of workers with education below the level of upper secondary	Working at home is most prevalent among self-employed workers (41%). Teleworking is most prevalent among legislators, senior officials and managers (15.1%), professionals (9.2%), and technicians and associate professionals (7.2%)
EL	A total of 205,489	Working from home is	Women account for	The incidence	Data not	Workers who work from

	workers work from home, including teleworkers, although 64% of these work only occasionally from home (LFS survey 2006)	most prevalent in the education, real estate management and agriculture sectors	around 51% of workers who work from home and they also work from home on a more permanent basis than men do	of working at home increases with age in the case of men, but peaks in the 30–44 year age group for women	available	home are most likely to work in scientific and artistic occupations, followed by skilled farmers and technical workers
ES	An estimated 4.1% of workers always work at home, 3.4% work at home half of the time and 7.9% do so occasionally (2004 figures). 4.9% of workers telework (2006 figures)	Teleworking is most prevalent among added value services (1.7%), IT industries (5.5%) and traditional services (5.2%)	Women comprise 65.7% of teleworkers	87% of teleworkers are aged between 25 and 40 years old	65.5% of teleworkers have tertiary-level education, 33.9% have secondary-level education and 0.7% primary-level education only	Two thirds of teleworkers are engaged in sales, commercial and marketing activities. 12.1% of teleworkers are self-employed
FI	The proportion of employees working at home at least occasionally or partly was 31% in 2003. However, only 15% of employees worked solely at home	51% of employees in the public sector worked at home in 2004, compared with 30% in private services and 27% in manufacturing and construction	According to the Finnish Quality of work life survey 2003, 31% of men and 30% of women worked occasionally or partly at home	The highest incidence of working occasionally or partly at home was in the 35–44 year age group (37%), followed by the 45–54 year age group (33%)	Data not available	In terms of socio-economic class, upper white-collar workers were far more likely (70%) to work occasionally or partly at home than were lower white-collar (27%) or blue collar workers

						(8%)
FR	7% of employees in France are teleworkers (broken down into 2% who work from home and 5% who work in other places), according to data relating to 1999–2003	Corporate services, banks and insurance companies are most likely to use teleworkers. In addition, the level of work in the home help sector is increasing	Men are more likely than women to telework	Data not available	Teleworkers are more likely to be highly qualified	Executives and middle managers make up a large proportion of teleworkers
HU	2% of employees worked at premises other than their company premises in 2004	The incidence of working away from the company premises is higher than average in the financial services sector (16%) and lowest in catering, accommodation, services, transport, storage, post, telecommunications and the construction industry	Men are slightly more likely than women to work away from the company premises (2.1% compared with 1.8% in 2004)	People working away from the company premises are mainly in the 25–29 year and 45–49 year age groups	Among people working at different premises, the proportion of workers who have a university or college degree is higher than that among the overall workforce. However, a large number of employees with secondary educational qualifications also work away from the company premises	The incidence of working away from the workplace is highest among professionals, (representing 34% of all such workers) and legislators, senior officials and managers (19%)
IE	According to data from February 2003	A total of 6.8% of workers in the financial	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	According to 2003 data, teleworkers comprised

	(Quarterly National Household Survey Module on Teleworking), nearly 10% (148,100) of people in non-agricultural employment worked away from home to some extent and almost 60,000 of these used a computer with a telecommunications link. Of the latter group, 38,700 were home-based teleworkers	and other services sector telework. Furthermore, teleworkers account for 2.6% of workers in education, 1.9% of those in manufacturing and 1.5% of those in construction				6.3% of managers or administrators, 5.5% of professionals, 4.4% of associate professional or technical workers and 1.3% of clerical and secretarial workers
IT	According to data from 2002, 2.2% of workers work at home and 16% do not work in a fixed place, defined as mobile workers	The sector where working at home is most prevalent is real estate and business activities (9.9%), followed by commerce (3%) and services (2.8%). Mobile working is most prevalent in construction (63.8%) and transport and	Women are slightly more likely to work at home than men are (2.4% compared with 2.1%). Men are much more likely to be mobile workers (22.5% compared with 5.1% in the case of women)	Data not available	Working at home is more likely in the case of professionals (10.9%) than unskilled workers (2.8%)	Technical workers are most likely to work at home (47.4%), followed by legislators, managers and entrepreneurs (21.3%). People working in trade occupations are least likely to work at home (1.7%). Workers in the general category of

		communications (40.5%)				blue-collar workers are most likely to be mobile workers (28.2%); craft and skilled workers are least likely to be mobile workers (1.5%)
LV	Data not available	Occupations such as drivers and mobile plant operators, architects and town and traffic planners are most likely to work away from the employer's premises	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
LT	It is estimated that 1.6% of the workforce works at home	High incidence in the construction sector and in real estate, renting and business activities	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
LU	A 2004 household survey found that 4% of people worked at home. 12% of companies used teleworking	Teleworking is most prevalent in the IT sector, where one third of companies use teleworking	Men are slightly more likely than women to telework (4 out of 10 men, compared with 3 out of 10 women)	Data not available	Professionals and senior managers are more likely to use the internet for work-related activities away from the place of work than blue-collar workers are	Senior executives and independent professionals are most likely to use the internet for work-related activities away from the place of

						work
MT	<p>Around 3.8% of employers use some form of telework (2004/2005 data). Around 11.4% of employees state that they regularly telework</p>	<p>Working away from the workplace is most prevalent in real estate, renting and business activities, energy, transport, storage and communications, and financial services (banking and insurance)</p>	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	<p>Working away from the place of work is most prevalent among professionals and managers, including teachers</p>
NL	<p>23% of employees carry out a part of their job at home and 2.7% work mainly from home. 4.1% of employees are teleworkers (2004 figures)</p>	<p>The incidence of teleworking is highest in the financial/business services sector (10.8%), while working partly or mainly at home is most prevalent in the public and education sector (35.5%) and the financial/business services sector (22.3%)</p>	<p>Slightly more men than women work partly or mainly at home or telework from home (24.6% for men and 18.3% for women)</p>	<p>Working at a distance is most common for workers in the 35–44 year age group. It is least common among workers aged under 25 years</p>	<p>The incidence of teleworking and working at home increases according to educational level, from 7.9% in the lowest educational group, to 54.1% in the case of those with a university degree</p>	<p>Working at home is most prevalent among supervisors (35.8%) and professionals (28.2%)</p>

NO	<p>2000 data (based on people earning income from working at home) show that 10% of employees work at home, broken down into 7% working both at home and in other places and 3% working only at home.</p> <p>A different survey, also relating to 2000 (the Norwegian survey of living conditions), shows that 14% of employees work away from the employer's premises, with 5.6% working at home and 1% working only at home</p>	<p>The incidence of employees working away from the employer's workplace is highest in real estate (23.5%) and construction (20.5%)</p>	<p>No significant difference between the incidence of men and women working at home during the week. However, men are more likely than women to work at home at the weekends</p>	<p>Data not available</p>	<p>The likelihood of working at home increases according to educational level. 23% of employees with tertiary education are reported to work at home, compared with 7% of those with secondary education</p>	<p>Working away from the employer's premises is most prevalent among craft workers (25%)</p>
PL	<p>In 2004, 7.8% of the workforce had more than one workplace</p>	<p>9.1% of men and 6.2% of women had more than one workplace in 2004</p>	<p>Data not available</p>	<p>Data not available</p>	<p>Data not available</p>	<p>Data not available</p>

PT	The incidence of teleworking was 2.2% of total employment in 1998–1999	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
RO	A total of 13.7% of workers work from home, in addition to a further 3% who work at the home of the employer or client (2006 figures)	People working away from the place of work are more likely to be found in agriculture, forestry and fisheries	15.8% of women and 11.9% of men work at home	People who work from home are most commonly found in the 50 years and over age group, accounting for 25.8% of these types of worker	Data not available	Data not available
SK	An estimated 1% of employees telework	Data not available	No statistical difference between the incidence of teleworking in the case of men and women	The most interest in teleworking is expressed by people in the 33–44 year age group	Interest in teleworking increases according to the level of educational attainment	Data not available
SL	4.9% of workers telework at home (2002 figures). According to a 2001 study, 20% of employees mainly worked at a location away from their workplace (5.7% of	The majority of teleworkers (80%) work in the services sector (2004 figures)	According to data from 2004, the incidence of teleworking among women was 3.1%, compared with 2.2% for men (this study gave an overall teleworking figure of 2.6%).	Data not available	A 2002 study found that 43% of teleworkers had a university education (compared with 17% of the workforce nationally). A 2004 study found that 50% of teleworkers had a higher	A 2002 study found that 12% of teleworkers were managers and experts. A 2004 study found that half of teleworkers were professionals

	employees worked at home)		However, a 2002 study found that 63% of regular teleworkers were male		education qualification	
UK	The proportion of teleworkers has increased from 4% of the workforce in 1997 to 8% in 2005	24% of teleworkers work in real estate, renting and business activities, 23% in construction, 11% in manufacturing and 11% in education	Around two thirds of teleworkers (65%) are male. In spring 2005, the teleworking rate for men was 11%, compared with 6% for women	Teleworking is most common among older workers (aged over 50 years) and is increasing at a faster rate than for other age groups, from 5% in spring 1997 to 12% by spring 2005. Teleworking is least common among 16–24 year-olds (2%)	Teleworking and working at home appears to be more common among workers with higher levels of education. For example, 23% of managers and senior officials and 26% of professional and technical staff telework mainly from home, compared with 1% of process plant and machine operatives and no statistically significant number of those in elementary occupations	The majority of homeworkers are self-employed (64%). 27% are skilled workers, 16% are managers and senior officials, 13% are professionals, and 17% work in associated professional and secretarial roles. In terms of teleworkers, 62% are self-employed. 23% are managers and senior officials, 18% are professionals, and 23% work in associated professional and technical roles

Source: EWCO national correspondents, 2006

Health and safety

Working away from the company premises may have consequences for a worker's health and safety in a range of areas. This section examines the main issues arising and gives examples of how problems are being resolved in different countries.

Computer workstations and work environment

Specific problems connected with workstations and equipment may arise for homeworkers and teleworkers, as they do not have access to the constant technical and ergonomic support that their office-based colleagues enjoy. Some of these issues are addressed by the EU-level cross-sector social partners' framework agreement on telework (see above under EU multi-sector initiatives). This agreement states that the employer is responsible for the protection of the occupational health and safety of the teleworker, in accordance with [Council Directive 89/391/EEC](#) on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work, relevant ensuing directives on specific health and safety issues, as well as national legislation and collective agreements.

The framework agreement also states that the employer should inform the teleworker of the company's policy on occupational health and safety, and in particular of the requirements on visual display units (VDUs). It is then up to the teleworker to apply these safety policies correctly. Finally, the agreement states that, in order to verify that the health and safety provisions are properly applied, the employer, worker representatives and/or relevant authorities should have access to the place of telework. If the teleworker is working at home, access is subject to prior notification and agreement. Teleworkers are also entitled to request inspection visits.

According to the EU cross-sector social partners' implementation report, a range of health and safety provisions have been incorporated into Member States' national implementing provisions. For example, the UK implementing guide and the Irish code of practice make reference to the applicable national and EU regulations in the area of health and safety. The UK implementing guide also gives further details on the hazards that can arise from electrical equipment and VDUs, in addition to the special protection to which new or expectant mothers are entitled.

Member States' implementing provisions also contain some limits on the application of health and safety rules. For instance, the UK guide states that the employer is responsible for the safety of the equipment that it supplies, but that the teleworkers' domestic electrical system is their own responsibility. The Polish draft social partner agreement on this subject envisages that the teleworker must receive health and safety training before starting teleworking, in particular on the use of VDUs, although general health and safety rules do not apply to the workstation if it is situated at home. In Hungary, the labour code stipulates that the general health and safety rules in force apply to teleworkers if their equipment is owned by the employer.

The EWCS 2005 shows some interesting results on the issue of health and safety risk. When asked whether their health and safety was at risk because of their work, around 53% of people who worked at the company premises all or almost all of the time responded that it was. Over 20% of people who worked in places other than at home or at the employer's premises – for example, at a client's premises or on the road – all of the time or almost all of the time also answered yes. A total of 2.5% of those who worked at home, excluding telework, all or almost all of the time, gave the same answer, as did just over 31% of those who never or almost never worked at their employer's premises.

National health and safety legislation that protects workers who work with VDUs covers teleworkers and homeworkers as well as office-based workers in the majority of countries surveyed. The relevant laws normally require employers to assess and reduce risks, ensure that workstations meet minimum requirements, plan breaks or change of activity, provide eye tests on request, and provide health and safety training and information. Legislation also often requires employers to carry out regular follow-up inspections of the workstation and the working environment. In Greece, although there is no dedicated legislation covering telework, the National General Collective Agreement for 2004–2005 ([GR0409102F](#)) incorporates the provisions of the EU framework agreement on telework.

However, compliance with the legislation seems to be uneven in the case of non-office-based workers in many countries. In Latvia, although teleworkers and homeworkers are covered by national health and safety legislation, it is reported that compliance is scant in the case of people working away from the company premises. In Hungary, although employers seem to be reliable in carrying out pre-work employer checks on the working environment and workstation, regular follow-up checks are not as widespread. In Estonia, the law does not stipulate how often follow-up checks of workstations and the work environment should take place. In addition, it is reported to be difficult to monitor any compliance with the law in Estonia. These inspection problems can be compounded by the fact that in some countries, such as Belgium, the inhabitant's or magistrate's written permission must be obtained before a teleworker's workplace can be inspected.

In Slovakia, the labour inspectorate itself carries out regular checks on the workplaces of teleworkers, in order to ensure that work equipment is adequately positioned and that the workstation is appropriately lit and heated. In Slovenia, the law requires employers to notify the labour inspectorate of any intention to organise working from home. The inspectorate will then visit the off-site premises and can prohibit the home working if it deems that it might be dangerous or may damage the health of the worker. In reality, however, although the Slovenian labour inspectorate reports on regular work carried out away from employer premises, it does not inspect premises used for occasional work in this regard.

Individual companies often have their own health and safety procedures for teleworkers. For example, at the oil and petroleum company [BP](#) in Portugal, a health and safety visit is carried out by the company before any teleworking begins, looking in particular at space, ergonomics and safety, as well as ensuring compliance with health and safety standards.

However, it would seem that workers who work with computers away from the employer's premises are more likely to suffer from injuries related to working with a computer. For example, a UK survey found that 47% of people using computers from home suffer from injuries such as eyestrain, headaches, back and neck aches and upper limb disorders. The survey was carried out by [ICM Research](#) on behalf of the organisation [Home Working Solutions](#). It surveyed 1,020 people about their computer usage. In Italy, 52% of men working at home or engaging in telework report over-use of computers – three times the number of office-based workers. A total of 20% of female remote workers also report computer over-use. Moreover, some 25.8% of male remote workers report working in awkward postures.

Furthermore, it would appear that many home-based workers who are working with a computer are not receiving adequate health and safety training. The aforementioned UK survey found that 70% of people who use their computer at home had either not received any training or advice on setting up the workstation or had taught themselves. In Malta, a survey carried out for the [Employment and Training Corporation](#) found that many employees who telework were not aware of the health and safety issues associated with teleworking.

There is some evidence that home-based workers are spending longer in sedentary and PC/VDU work than their office-based colleagues. In the Netherlands, sedentary work is highly prevalent among teleworkers and homeworkers, with 44.7% of these workers performing sedentary work for between six and eight hours a day, compared with 30.4% among people who are neither homeworkers nor teleworkers. Moreover, 25% of homeworkers and teleworkers spend between six and eight hours a day working in the same posture, compared with 19% of non-teleworkers and non-homeworkers. In the Netherlands, the 2004 TNO Work Situation Survey (TNO Arbeidssituatie Survey, TAS), coordinated by [TNO Work and Employment](#), found that complaints about job-related musculoskeletal disorders were actually slightly higher among non-teleworkers and non-homeworkers but that these workers tend to suffer less from severe work fatigue or burnout than teleworkers and homeworkers do. Overall, office-based workers were absent due to sickness more often.

Taking regular breaks from computer work is acknowledged as important in preventing injuries. However, home-based workers are less likely to do this. The above-mentioned UK survey found that 83% of respondents did not have software on their computer that prompted them to take breaks when necessary.

It should be noted that occupational health and safety legislation in many of the new Member States (NMS) which have joined the EU since 2004 is at present being updated. For example, the relevant legislation in Slovakia is currently being amended, with the focus on a range of areas including education and training in occupational health and safety. Similarly, in the Czech Republic, the proposed new labour code ([CZ0610029I](#)) includes a section that transposes the EU-level social partners' 2002 framework agreement on teleworking.

In some countries, the health and safety debate also encompasses those workers who telework from a range of places such as hotel rooms and airport lounges. This is the case in Denmark, where public authorities make special mention of this particular situation.

Safety issues in non-sedentary jobs

In addition to workers who work mainly on computers, a number of employees engaged in other types of professions regularly perform non-sedentary work away from the employer's premises. These types of worker often work in industries such as construction, agriculture and care services.

There is some evidence of accidents taking place away from the place of work in certain sectors. In Spain in 2004, 6.5% of the total number of work-related accidents took place away from the usual workplace. A large number of these accidents were in the construction sector. In Poland, although no statistical evidence exists, it is thought that the majority of harmful and dangerous events are associated with work that is carried out away from the employer's premises. In Lithuania, the highest number of work-related accidents in 2005 took place in the mining and quarrying industry, the manufacturing of building materials industry, construction, wood processing and metal processing – sectors where workers often perform work in locations that are not on the employer's premises.

In Ireland, the [Electricity Supply Board](#) has been at the forefront in developing health and safety policies for workers working away from the company premises. It ensures that workers who work at remote locations complete task checklists before commencing work.

In Bulgaria, 9.3% of employees believe that their health and safety is at risk due to the lack of a permanent place of work or the fact that their workplace is constantly changing. The main reported risks are connected with vision, technical safety due to old equipment, injuries from electrical current and risks related to the handling of loads.

Construction workers and temporary agency workers are reported to have the highest health and safety risk in Belgium, as they are most likely to experience a work-related injury or accident.

In France, subcontracting is a focus for debate, with studies showing that working conditions for subcontracted employees are not as advantageous as for employees of the contracting company. Subcontracting is reported to be particularly prevalent in the nuclear sector: the energy group [EDF](#) is reported to subcontract over 85% of its nuclear maintenance work. A study (Doniol-Shaw et al, 2003) found that subcontracted workers carrying out nuclear maintenance activities were more likely to be exposed to health and safety risks than non-subcontracted workers were.

In Finland, home help service workers widely report the incidence of work-related musculoskeletal disorders, due to the fact that it is difficult to ergonomically assess a client's home. Home care workers in Belgium also face a range of problems, including being obliged to work in unhygienic houses, and 10% report working in an environment that they deem to be unsafe. In Austria, home care workers are reported to suffer from burnout and emotional strain. In France, where the home care sector is expanding rapidly, a study on working conditions in this sector (Yahiaoui and Nicot, 2002) found that workers are exposed to an intensive work rate, isolated working conditions and a range of physical problems such as musculoskeletal disorders and back problems.

Workers in the transport sector are also exposed to health and safety risks. The Luxembourg Confederation of Independent Trade Unions ([Onofhängege Gewerkschaftsbond Lëtzebuerg, OGB-L](#)) states that the main risk factor for this sector is falling asleep at the steering wheel as a result of fatigue caused by non-respect of rest periods. In Ireland, [Dublin City Council](#), which is the largest local authority in the country, has recently published guidance on health and safety issues for the drivers of its fleet of 1,300 vehicles.

Furthermore, a range of risks are faced by homeworkers working in the manufacturing industry. For example, a study of around 300 homeworkers in the Italian shoe manufacturing industry (Toffanin, 2000) found evidence of carpal tunnel and ulnar nerve inflammation and of curtailed sickness absence or an unwillingness to seek treatment when workflow is high.

Accidents during travel and commuting

In some countries, accidents that take place while workers are commuting or travelling for work purposes are a cause for concern. In Spain, 4.4% of the total number of work-related accidents in 2004 took place during journeys undertaken in working time; this does not include journeys to and from the place of work. In Finland, home help service workers who visit several clients during a shift are vulnerable to traffic accidents. In order to reduce the number of work-related traffic accidents, these workers have been instructed not to hurry and some who cycle have been provided with safety helmets and non-slip tyres for winter use.

In Luxembourg, an increase in commuting accidents has resulted in the launch of information campaigns by interest groups and supported by trade unions. An upwards trend in work-related road accidents has also been found in Italy, with the total number rising by 17.2% between 2004 and 2005 and the number of fatal accidents increasing by 23.4%. In France, road accidents are reported to account for 25% of all fatal occupational accidents and 5% of occupational accidents resulting in a permanent inability to work.

In Ireland, the issue of work and commuting-related traffic accidents has been at the forefront of debate in recent years. It is estimated that over 370 road traffic deaths occur each year in Ireland and that around one third of these are work-related.

Commuting can result in considerable stress for workers. In Belgium, for example, it is reported that construction workers are obliged to travel between 20 and 70 kilometres to sites, increasing stress and fatigue for these workers.

In Norway, there is considerable concern about health and safety for employees in the oil extraction sector, where helicopter transportation is frequently used. This form of transport is considered to be comparatively high risk and accidents have occurred.

Risk prevention

Health and safety policies and absence or sick leave policies are the main means by which companies try to minimise the risks associated with working away from the employer's premises. These policies include elements such as ensuring regular breaks from screen work, the provision of regular eye tests and glasses with a protective coating and the offer of posture-improving exercise classes. The TAS 2004 study in the Netherlands found that homeworkers and teleworkers were slightly more satisfied with their employer's health and safety and absence/sick leave policies than office-based workers were.

In countries where the sector level plays a dominant role in the regulation of working conditions, such as Germany, agreements at this level often contain comprehensive prevention measures. For example, the agreements in the German manufacturing and construction sectors contain detailed provisions in areas such as the use of equipment, the repair and maintenance of the equipment, and checks on the working environment and the workstation.

In Luxembourg, the 2006 national collective agreement on teleworking ([LU0606029I](#)) specifies that the employer must inform teleworkers of company policy regarding health and safety at work and in particular the requirements relating to VDUs.

Data protection

The issue of responsibility for data protection is reported to be a problem in some countries. In Hungary, for example, the debate centres on who is responsible in the case of a breach of data protection legislation, as an employee who has been working away from the company premises must prove that the breach occurred during working time.

In Luxembourg, the 2006 national collective agreement on teleworking states that the employer should ensure the protection of the data used and processed by the teleworker for professional purposes.

Work organisation

Some countries maintain controls on the organisation of work in the case of teleworkers and homeworking. For example, in Belgium, national collective agreement 85 states that agreement on a range of issues must be reached between the teleworker and the employer before the teleworking begins. These include the frequency of telework, periods of work in the office, issues surrounding technical support, employer financial responsibility in the case of equipment repairs, and the conditions under which the teleworking may stop. Similarly, in Luxembourg, the 2006 agreement on teleworking regulates, for the first time at national level, terms and conditions for teleworkers.

In Slovenia, organisation of work carried out away from the employer's premises is covered by some sectoral agreements, such as those in the banking and savings banks sectors. Collective agreements also play a role in the regulation of the working conditions and tasks of remote workers in Poland.

Autonomy and supervision

Workers who carry out work away from the company premises have more autonomy than their office-based colleagues as they are subjected to less managerial supervision. This raises issues in areas such as how remote employees cope with autonomy and how employers manage and supervise these workers.

There is some evidence that employers use technology to try to keep track of the work progress of non-office-based employees. For example, some employers in Austria fit employees' cars with Global Positioning Systems (GPS) or expect employees to transmit data on their location at certain times. In Cyprus, the use of timesheets is widespread. In Bulgaria, employers tend to telephone non-office-based employees or require them to report regularly on the work progress made. In Hungary, a range of IT-based controls are used to supervise remote workers, including log in and log out times, the receipt and submission of daily tasks via a company intranet and the submission of timesheets on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. In Malta, part-time research assistants at the [University of Malta](#) hand in time sheets at the end of each month as evidence of the hours they have worked during that month. Research in Malta also found that, in general, professionals tend to work unsupervised whereas workers with lower skills levels are subject to more supervision when working away from the place of work, with a clearer delineation of duties and responsibilities.

Research from Austria found that there was a trend to standardise the tasks of certain groups of workers who work away from company premises, such as field staff and home care workers. In France, it is reported that telework is often carried out on a project basis, as workers cannot be supervised closely. In Norway, the work rate of sales staff and consultants is measured in terms of output rather than time spent working.

In many countries, employers are aware of the potential supervision problems of managing teleworkers and remote workers, but believe that this type of working often results in improvements in the quality of work and an increase in output. In Estonia, an extensive study of the estimated impact of telework ([Ariko Marketing, 2002 \(in Estonian, 571Kb PDF\)](#)) found that 45% of employers who used teleworkers felt that this had a positive impact on quality of work, compared with 13% who felt that it had a negative impact. However, 22% of employers using telework felt that this had a negative impact on managing the enterprise, compared with 17% who felt that it had a positive impact in this regard. In Slovenia, a survey of managers, organised by the Faculty of Organisational Sciences at the University of Maribor in 1997 (Jereb and Jereb, 1998), found that working away from the place of work potentially changes the management's control over workers.

In some countries, such as Spain, employers putting into place teleworking arrangements will often choose workers who display certain characteristics such as the ability to work autonomously without a great deal of supervision. In the UK, employers often select workers for teleworking who work in jobs that require little supervision. In some companies, a minimum length of service is required before an employee may apply for homeworking. In addition, some companies, such as the telecommunications group [BT](#), may judge certain employees to be unsuitable for homeworking if they have a naturally gregarious nature. In Norway, a 1999 report in the municipal sector acknowledges that it is a challenge to manage employees at a distance and states that not all employees are suited to remote working, which is a form of working that relies on trust between the employer and the employee.

Alternatively, working practices such as home-based teleworking can often be used by employers as a way of giving more autonomy and flexibility to valued workers who do not need supervision. For example, a study carried out by the [Hans Böckler Foundation](#) in Germany (Kamp, 2000),

examining 68 works agreements on home-based telework, found that this practice was related to the employees' decision on when to work at home rather than related to the work itself.

Professionals in many countries routinely perform work away from the normal place of work because they have not had sufficient time to complete all their tasks during normal working hours. In Malta, the example of teachers is cited, in addition to other professionals such as lawyers and accountants.

Social support

People who work away from the employer's premises all of the time may suffer from a lack of social contact with their colleagues. This appears to be an issue in many countries and is more apparent among lower-skilled workers than those with relatively higher skills, as the lower-skilled workers are less likely to participate in team briefing meetings.

According to data from the EWCS 2005, when people were asked whether their job involved rotating tasks between themselves and colleagues – which would indicate that people were well-integrated into the rest of the workforce – 80.1% of people who work at home, including teleworkers, stated that their job did not. Likewise, 74.2% of those combining working away from the company premises and at home stated that their job did not involve task rotation, and 64.8% of those working solely outside the company premises gave the same answer. This compares with 52.4% of those working on the company premises, and 55.5% of those combining work on the company premises and at home, who stated that their job did not involve task rotation.

In a survey carried out in Belgium (Walrave, 2005), teleworkers reported the loss of social contact with colleagues (69.4%) and decreased involvement in corporate activities (35.8%) as a disadvantage. In Austria, a survey found that, although teleworkers did not experience any fewer opportunities for regular contact and exchanges with colleagues, they needed to rely on their own initiative to initiate these contacts much more than was the case for their office-based colleagues. By contrast, in Estonia, the above-mentioned 2002 survey found that 70% of teleworkers believed that this way of working had a negative impact on their connection and involvement with other employees. Likewise, in Finland, workers in a 2005 case study on mobile work (Hyrkkänen and Vartiainen, 2005; Vartiainen, 2005) stated that they felt isolated, with minimal support from the office. Even when social contact is made, these workers sometimes feel like outsiders.

The exception to this appears to be France, where – according to a study (Bérard et al, 2002) – 63% of teleworkers claimed to socialise with colleagues outside the workplace, compared with 52% of other types of employees.

In Portugal, the issue of social isolation for remote workers is dealt with in the country's labour code, which obliges the employer to promote regular contact between the remote worker and the company and other workers, in order to prevent isolation. In Norway too, legislation seeks to regulate the issue of working alone. The Norwegian [Act of 17 June 2005 \(136Kb PDF\)](#) relating to the working environment, working hours and employment protection, known as the Working Environment Act (Arbeidsmiljøloven, AML) states that the work of those who work predominantly alone should be organised in such a way as to allow the worker the opportunity to have contact with colleagues.

In countries where collective agreements play an important role in the regulation of working conditions, clauses governing work carried out away from the place of work are often contained in these agreements. For example, in Germany, works agreements on telework arrange for employees to attend regular meetings on the company premises. In Luxembourg, the national agreement on teleworking, concluded in 2006 (see above), stipulates that employers should ensure that measures are taken to prevent teleworkers from becoming isolated from their office-

based colleagues. These initiatives can include providing opportunities for regular meetings and access to company information.

Employers have developed a range of ways to ensure that their remote workers have regular contact with the office. One approach is to make sure that these workers take part in company events and attend frequent and regular personal meetings. In Latvia, virtual teamworking is sometimes used to ensure social contact for remote workers. In Portugal, BP stipulates that teleworkers should visit the office at least once every two weeks in order to maintain contact with the company, colleagues and superiors. The company provides a pool of desks specifically for these workers. In the UK, companies have a range of policies in place to ensure that homeworkers do not feel isolated. These include grouping homeworkers into teams that are geographically close, providing shared desks in the office as well as virtual contact facilities, through which home-based workers can meet online for a live forum and discussion. In Italy, the practice of mixed teleworking is popular, under which teleworking and working on the company premises is alternated, with the teleworker spending one or two days a week in the office.

Trade unions can also play a role in helping remote employees to overcome social isolation. In the UK, the trade union [Amicus](#) has devised a code of practice for employees who work at home, aimed at helping them to avoid isolation. This advocates regular meetings and contacts with colleagues. In Germany, the United Services Union ([Vereinte Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft, ver.di](#)) organises a range of activities for freelance workers and dependent self-employed workers.

Demands of the job and pace of work

People who work at home rather than on their employer's premises will generally have more freedom to choose their own pace of work than their office-based colleagues have. This is borne out by data from the EWCS 2005. When asked whether their pace of work was dependent on the work done by colleagues, 83.2% of those working at home, including teleworkers, responded that it was not. Similarly, 73.9% of those combining work at home and away from the company premises gave the same answer.

When asked whether pace of work was dependent on numerical production targets or performance targets, again, a majority of people working at home stated that it was not: 77.2% of those working at home, including teleworkers, gave this response. However, this proportion fell to 58.6% in the case of workers who worked away from the company premises but not at home. When asked whether their pace of work was dependent on the direct control of their boss, 84.9% of those working at home, including teleworkers, replied that it was not. Furthermore, 87.9% of those combining work away from the company premises and at home gave the same response, and 72.4% of those mixing work at the company premises and at home reported the same.

In the Czech Republic, a survey of employees who worked away from the company premises ([Briezová, 2006; in Czech](#)) found that these workers appreciated the flexibility in the pace of work that this type of working provided, and believed that this increased efficiency. A survey carried out in Bulgaria, commissioned by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in 2005 on quality of life and working conditions, found that 97.6% of home-based workers were free to choose their own pace and sequence of work. Some 86.1% of people working at customer premises, such as real estate agents and inspectors, could work autonomously. Moreover, 94.4% of respondents overall stated that they could change their work methods autonomously and 34.2% of those surveyed reported that they could include new tasks in their work schedule if they wanted. Likewise, the 2003 Finnish [Quality of work life survey](#) found that 40% of teleworkers stated that they could influence the pace of their work, compared with 24% of other employees, and 36% of teleworkers reported that they could influence the content of their tasks, compared

with 15% of other employees. In addition, 50% of teleworkers stated that they could influence the order of their tasks, compared with 38% of other employees.

The above-mentioned 2002 study from Estonia found that 63% of employers who use teleworkers found that this had a positive impact on the pace of work and adherence to deadlines. Most case studies in Hungary have found that working away from the place of work tends to be more effective in terms of ensuring a high pace of work without interruptions. Where working away from the company premises has been in place for between one and two years, both employers and employees report improvements in terms of work effectiveness. However, the Hungarian studies also found that, in a limited number of cases, homeworkers found it difficult to combine work with their home life.

In the Netherlands, a study showed that higher quantitative job demands were placed on workers who teleworked from home – and on those who worked from home but did not telework – than was the case for office-based workers. In Italy, a 2002 study found that mobile workers were more likely to report a high pace of work (36.7%) than were office-based workers (33.1%), although homeworkers were less likely to report this experience (30.7%).

One potentially negative effect of working away from the place of work is that workers who work in this way often cannot ask for help from colleagues as readily as office-based workers can. Another potential problem is the fact that home-based employees may not switch off from work-related activities as easily as their office-based colleagues. This is recognised in a number of UK companies, as highlighted in a study by the UK research organisation [Incomes Data Services](#) (2005).

Finally, numerous examples are given from several countries of workers who work at home on piece rates – that is, being paid per unit produced or action performed – being subjected to more pressure in terms of pace of work than remote workers who receive a regular salary.

Working time and work–life balance

The issue of working time and work–life balance mainly affects workers who work at home, although it may also affect workers who work at clients' premises. This section examines the topics of working time flexibility, implications for work–life balance, the calculation of working time, the blurring of boundaries between work life and home life, and the constant contactability of these types of workers.

Flexibility

Most workers who work at home can influence the start and finish times of their working day and organise their working time around other tasks during the working day.

According to data from the EWCS, 64% of people who work at home, including teleworkers, do not have set start and finish times, increasing to 82.8% in the case of people who combine working away from the company premises and from home. A total of 51.1% of people working solely away from the company premises reported that they do not have fixed start and finish times. Moreover, 53.7% of those working at home, including teleworkers, stated that they determined their own working hours.

Furthermore, 81.7% of those working at home, including teleworkers, stated that they could change the order of their tasks. The same was true for 80.2% of those combining work on the company premises and at home, and for 83% of those combining work outside the company premises and at home. This compares with 60% of company-based workers and 69.6% of those combining work on the company premises and away from the place of work.

In the Netherlands, for example, the TAS 2004 study found that teleworkers who work from home had much more flexibility around the start and end time of their working day and their rest breaks than office-based workers had. They also had a much greater opportunity to deal with private matters during their working day than their office-based colleagues. A Finnish survey (Nätti et al, 2005) found that 73% of people who worked at least partly from home could choose their own working pace, and 72% of them could choose their own rhythm and choice of working time. Likewise, the Czech qualitative study of homeworking using computer technology (Briezová, 2006), shows that flexible working hours are the principal benefit of working from home and benefit both employees with families and those without.

In terms of the optimum number of days of working away from the employer's premises, Norwegian studies found that between one and three days of working at home a week was the ideal balance, but that the more days an employee works at home, the more distance they will feel to their office-based colleagues.

In Germany, under 'working time on trust' arrangements, employees can determine their own daily start and end times by agreement with colleagues and supervisors. Although these types of arrangements are mainly organised for knowledge workers, they can be extended to cover lower-skilled employees.

However, in Austria, it is reported that the flexibility achieved by workers deciding to work at home because they have children does not entirely meet their desired level of flexibility.

Work–life balance

Many employees who work at home state that their work–life balance has subsequently improved. It is reported in several countries that employees working at home are better able to match their working patterns with other important aspects of their lives, which reduces stress and increases overall contentment.

According to data from the EWCS, 85.6% of those who worked at home, including teleworkers, stated that their working hours fitted in very well or well with their family or social commitments outside work. However, 81.2% of those working on the company premises said the same, and some 73.1% of those working away from the company premises also agreed in respect of their working hours and family or social commitments.

At BT in the UK, the above-mentioned IDS survey found that its home-based employees are 7% more content in their job than their office-based colleagues are. In Estonia, 2005 data show that 59% of teleworkers are satisfied with their work–family life balance; this compares with 23% for full-time office-based workers and 42% for those working part time. In France, studies have shown that the majority of teleworkers can successfully combine work and private commitments due to their work situation, although they report that this requires a certain amount of self-discipline. However, in France, work–life balance is reported to be more difficult for workers who work in a variety of different places.

For the employer, improved work–life balance among workers can result in a lower staff turnover and a reduced rate of sickness absence. At [Vertex](#) in the UK, homeworkers take less short-term sickness absence and return to work after long-term sickness absence more quickly than their office-based colleagues do. In Spain, [IBM Spain](#) encourages homeworking and 80% of its staff now have a laptop computer, which enables them to work away from the office. The company states that the productivity and job satisfaction of its workers has increased due to a better work–life balance. In Hungary, case studies of working away from the company premises have shown that, although staff turnover does not decrease during the introduction period, in the medium term

there is a perceptible improvement in staff turnover and reduction in the incidence of absence from work.

In some countries, the government encourages teleworking and working from home as a way of improving work–life balance. The Spanish government actively promotes teleworking as a tool for facilitating work–life balance in the public sector. Employees taking part in a teleworking trial reported increased job satisfaction stemming from the fact that they were better able to combine working with leisure activities, training and family responsibilities. In Slovenia, the emphasis has been more on combining work with family life. Here, a national project on family-friendly enterprises was launched in 2006, which promoted more flexible working time and more flexibility in terms of the place of work. The Slovakian government also promotes the reconciliation of work and family life and is introducing new measures to this end as part of a wide-ranging reform in the area of employment and social policy. The Slovakian government has also introduced a Family Friendly Employer award, of which one criterion is to enable flexible working and improve the reconciliation of work and family life. In Ireland, the government has taken a number of initiatives designed to promote awareness of the issues surrounding work–life balance, which are outlined on its website: www.worklifebalance.ie. Furthermore, under a government-funded project in 2002, homeworking was introduced for a group of pilot employees. An additional benefit to this scheme was that the employees were then also able to use the technology provided while travelling.

One of the main benefits of homeworking, cited by many countries, is the fact that employees working at home can save time on commuting to and from work. Two of the five UK companies surveyed in the earlier mentioned IDS study reported significant time savings as a result of homeworking, in one worker’s case of almost 16 hours a week. In Finland, the results of the 2005 survey compiled by Nätti et al found that one in three employees working at least partly at home stated that a reduction in commuting time was a positive factor. In Austria, it is also reported that teleworkers are saving time by not commuting. This has enabled such workers to spend more time at home, although not necessarily directly with their families.

Working from home can benefit women in particular, especially in countries where the burden of childcare and the care of sick or elderly family members falls predominantly on women. This is the case in Malta, where commentators expect to see greater numbers of women working from home in the future, following an increase in the number of educated women in the workforce. In Italy, where women continue to shoulder a significant domestic burden, telework and working at home is seen as a way of improving work–life balance, to the extent that the majority of teleworkers are women.

However, in Denmark, although working at home would benefit women considerably, highly educated men are reported to be more likely than highly educated women to be offered the opportunity to work at home: this is the case for 50% of men, compared with 35% of women (Andersen et al, 2004).

Working time

The calculation of the working time of workers who work at home or away from the company premises can be difficult, as these workers are not subject to the controls in place at the workplace.

For example, overtime working is often not recognised in the case of homeworkers. In Slovakia, workers who work away from the company premises or at home are subject to a 40-hour working week, stipulated by the country’s labour code. These workers are not eligible for overtime payments for work carried out beyond these 40 hours or for work carried out at night or on

weekends and holidays. Likewise, in Hungary, few cases arise of homeworkers being paid for overtime.

Similarly, in the Netherlands, home-based workers and home-based teleworkers were found to be more likely to perform unpaid overtime due to pressures of work than office-based colleagues were. Furthermore, a study (Kraan and Dhondt, 2001) found that Dutch teleworkers worked an average of 46 hours a week, compared with an average 39-hour week for non-teleworkers.

Another potential negative effect of working away from the office is that workers may find themselves working longer hours. The [Danish contribution \(326Kb PDF\)](#) to the Sustainable Teleworking ([SusTel](#)) project, which was financed by the [European Commission](#), found that telework increases working time. Moreover, the aforementioned 2001 Dutch study found that teleworkers work 10 hours or more a day on average seven times a month, compared with three times a month for non-teleworkers. In Finland, 63% of employees in the 2005 study by Nätti et al reported that working at home was more likely to prolong their working hours more easily than working on the employer's premises. In Germany, a recent study (Munz, 2006) found that 32% of all employees in flexible working time arrangements work overtime, compared with 18% of those in 'normal' working time arrangements. Moreover, a 2004 German study found that working at home may lead to an increase in overtime and in the workload for female workers. Research from Denmark also indicates that working from home often leads to longer hours of work. In Austria too, working away from the employer's premises is associated with longer working hours, weekend work and evening work. This has a negative effect on work-life balance and raises stress levels. In addition, some groups of workers in Austria, such as sales staff and banking and insurance staff, often perform overtime that is not recognised and not remunerated. A study in Norway shows that employees who work at home work an average 40-hour week, compared with an average 35-hour week for office-based workers.

In Bulgaria, it is estimated that around 37% of people working at home or providing services at the premises of customers work in the evenings or at weekends. Likewise, in France, a study by the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies ([Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques, INSEE](#)) over the period 1999–2003 found that teleworkers commonly report working at night and on weekends – 20% stated that they regularly work between 22.00 and 06.00, compared with 10% of other employees.

Special mention should be made of teachers, who are cited in a number of countries as working large amounts of unpaid overtime. For example, in Estonia, although the working week for teachers should not exceed 35 hours, teachers are reported to be working 50.1 hours a week on average. This overtime is not calculated as working time and remains unremunerated.

Blurring of boundaries

One of the potential problems of working away from the company premises and working at home is that the work/non-work boundary can become blurred and people tend to carry on working in the evenings and at weekends, particularly if their office is in their home. Many employers recognise that this is a problem and some have introduced measures to counteract it. In Portugal, for example, BT pays particular attention to the observance of rest breaks and periods in order to ensure that homeworking does not encroach on the family and personal life of employees who work at home.

This issue often becomes more of a problem with project work, where, as the deadlines approach, people tend to work longer hours, including weekends, at home. This is reported to be the case in Malta. In the Czech Republic, although the respondents in the survey of homeworking using computer technology (Briezová, 2006) tried not to work in the evenings, evening work became a normal part of their lives. The incursion of work into other areas of an employee's life can also

put a strain on their relationships with the other members of their family. The above-cited Czech study found that the negative effects on home life of working at home were greater if the employee did not have a dedicated workstation in place.

In Hungary, although no research is available on this particular issue, most case studies of working away from the employer's premises cite the blurring of boundaries between work and non-work as an issue that is almost inevitable. Finding the solution to the problem is also usually the responsibility of the employee.

In Portugal, the blurring of boundaries between home life and work life is most apparent in the case of home workers and teleworkers – of these groups of workers, only around 30% never miss or neglect family activities due to work and 50% sometimes do.

An extensive debate on this issue is taking place in Germany, and some private sector works agreements on home-based teleworking prohibit overtime in order to try to eliminate the blurring of boundaries between work and non-work. Under these agreements, workers are obliged to keep working time logs and, if they work overtime, they must keep an overtime log for two years. However, there is no evidence on whether the keeping of logs is successful in preventing excess working hours.

The blurring of boundaries between work and non-work has also been a subject for debate in Denmark, where a survey on 'limitless work' (*grænseløst arbejde*) was carried out in 2006 by the Financial Services Union ([Finansforbundet](#)) ([DK06070191](#)). Such work describes jobs that are characterised as not being fixed to a certain location and not having to be performed within a certain timeframe; thus, they seem without limits or boundaries. The survey found that those employees who work while travelling or commuting, who undertake work outside office hours and who work more than 45 hours a week are subject to higher stress levels than other personnel.

Contactability

In many countries, professionals tend to suffer from constant contactability, with employers requiring them to be available at any time for telephone and email consultations.

The 2005 EWCS asked the survey participants whether they had been contacted over the previous 12 months – for instance, by telephone or email – about matters concerning their main job, outside of their normal working hours. Some 6.8% of those working at home, including teleworkers, reported that this happened every day, compared with 1.7% of those working on the company premises. Moreover, 12.1% of those working at home stated that this happened at least once a week, compared with 4.8% of those working on the company premises. Conversely, a total of 67.5% of those working on the company premises reported that this never happened, compared with 57.1% of those working at home. Employees who combined work at home and away from the company premises were most likely to be contacted outside of office hours – a total of 15.1% of these workers stated that they were contacted every day and 24.2% replied that they were contacted at least once a week.

In Hungary, rules on contactability can be contained in teleworking agreements. However, some Hungarian case studies in this area have shown that teleworkers feel that it is a problem that their company can contact them at any time. In Germany, some collective agreements and works agreements restrict contactability to normal working time and defined hours. In Luxembourg, the times and days of the week during which the teleworker is contactable must be contained in a written collective agreement. Furthermore, these working hours must not exceed the normal working time of a similar office-based worker.

The 2003 Finnish Quality of work life survey found that 60% of Finnish employees had been contacted about a work-related matter outside their normal working hours during the preceding

two months. However, according to a more recent Finnish study (Antila, 2005), the majority of workers contacted outside working time had volunteered to be contactable (78% in the case of men and 70% in the case of women). The debate in Finland centres on whether this is reasonable; one school of thought concludes that it is, as long as the volume of contact stays within reasonable limits. It is reported that employees often want to be contactable if they believe that the organisation of their working time is fair and flexible.

Other issues

Using telework to increase labour market access

Some countries have considered the role that telework might be able to play in increasing access to the labour market for people who find it difficult to enter into employment. For example, in Spain, certain labour market projects have been set up with this objective, such as the [Telecentre of Gordexola](#) in the Biscay province in the northwestern part of the Basque region, which enables people living in rural areas to access jobs that would normally only be available in urban areas.

Likewise, in Estonia, a number of projects have been set up with the aim of preparing people with disabilities or people in isolated communities to perform telework, as a way of gaining access to the labour market. These include a project on applying telework and flexible working in the area of Hiiumaa in the Baltic Sea, which is a relatively isolated island off the northwest coast of Estonia, and in other peripheral coastal regions of the country. It is hoped that the promotion of teleworking and flexible working will improve employment opportunities in these areas.

In Slovenia, the government has been promoting teleworking and working at home as a means of increasing labour market access for young workers, young unemployed people and people with disabilities. Measures to this end were included in the country's 2001 national employment policy programme and are ongoing. However, it is reported that these types of working are still at an early stage of development in Slovenia and some employers are hesitating in adopting them. Trade unions do not oppose teleworking and homeworking, but are concerned to ensure that adequate health and safety and protection measures are in place for these workers.

In Finland, teleworking has been used over the past decade to increase labour market opportunities for people living in remote areas and regions. In the 1990s, dedicated teleworking centres were built and several publicly-subsidised projects were launched in order to promote teleworking. Likewise, in Portugal, telework is seen as a labour market integration tool for people with disabilities, with companies employing people with disabilities to work on a telework basis to carry out tasks that involve technological knowledge.

Teleworking can also be used as a way of re-entering the labour market. For example, the Dutch labour inspectorate's website contains a number of case studies illustrating how to reintegrate workers into the labour market via teleworking.

Job security

The job security of workers who work away from the company premises was examined in the Netherlands in order to see whether these workers experience lower levels of job security than office-based workers do. However, the survey found that people who telework but not from home experienced only very slightly lower levels of job security than office-based workers, homeworkers who do not telework and homeworkers who do telework. The group working away from the workplace that enjoyed the highest levels of job security was homeworkers who do not telework.

Commentary

The practice of working away from the employer's premises is complex, not least because, as this study has shown, it encompasses a wide variety of types of worker. These range from unskilled workers in agriculture and construction workers, to sales staff, drivers, people who work in caring roles, such as home helps, and employees who would normally be office-based but can work away from the office. The latter category can be broken down further into those who predominantly work away from their employer's premises or from home and those who sometimes do, and those who use IT (teleworkers) and those who do not.

In terms of incidence, most countries report an increase over the past decade in the prevalence of office workers working at home and teleworking. This is largely due to the development of IT, which enables employees to work remotely from the office. Overall, in the NMS, the incidence of remote working is not as high as in many of the 15 countries that formed the EU before May 2004 (EU15), although it is growing, despite evidence of some hesitation on the part of employers in some of the NMS.

Working away from the employer's premises raises a wide range of health and safety issues. People working on construction sites and in agriculture are exposed to higher risks than are office-based staff in all countries. In the case of people performing office-based tasks either at home or at a workstation that is remote from the employer's premises, a number of potential health and safety risks arise. For those working on computers, these risks include inadequately designed workstations, a lack of risk assessments and health and safety and ergonomic checks, and a higher propensity to work without taking adequate breaks. Evidence also suggests that employers and employees are not as aware of their rights and obligations regarding the health and safety of remote workers as they are in relation to office-based staff.

However, despite the potential health and safety risks, working away from the employer's premises would appear to have numerous benefits. For example, the development of IT enables many employees to work from home who previously would have been obliged to be present in the office each day, thus allowing them to improve their work-life balance. In most countries, employees who work from home either predominantly or partly report a better work-life balance and, as a result, higher levels of job satisfaction. This can translate into a range of benefits for the employer, including higher levels of employee motivation, reduced staff turnover and a lower sickness absence rate.

Employees with family and caring responsibilities find it easier to combine their work with these responsibilities if they can work at home some or most of the time. Likewise, people with other types of commitments find that they can better juggle these with their work if they can work remotely.

There is also evidence that teleworking and working from home improves flexibility in the organisation of work. Employees working in this way in several countries reported that they had more control over their start and finish times, their pace of work and the order in which they performed tasks.

In addition, many employees engaging in teleworking or working from home reported reductions in commuting time, thus enabling people to use their time more productively, while at the same time reducing traffic congestion and pollution levels.

However, some potential disadvantages to remote working emerged in the studies. While the development of IT is an enabling factor, it has also allowed employers to monitor and control the output of their employees more closely, potentially causing stress and burnout if this leads to an increase in the pace of work. In many countries, employees working away from the employer's

premises reported that they were working longer hours than their office-based colleagues and were also more likely to be contacted by their employer outside normal working hours.

Moreover, in the case of working from home – either teleworking or not teleworking – the problem of how to prevent a blurring of boundaries between work and non-work is a major issue. In most cases, it would seem to be the responsibility of the individual employee to ensure that work does not spill over into private life. However, some companies have procedures in place that try to address this issue and the social partners in countries such as Finland and Denmark are debating how to reduce this problem.

Additionally, workers who spend a large part of their working life working remotely from their employer may be at risk of social isolation. This is a recognised problem in many countries and this study contains examples of the kind of arrangements employers put in place to counteract it. These can include virtual discussion forums and regular meetings and contact with the office. Trade unions in some countries have issued guidance on how to reduce social isolation.

Finally, in terms of future developments, as telecommunications technologies continue to develop, it is likely that certain forms of remote working, such as teleworking, will increase. This is particularly likely to be the case in the NMS, where teleworking currently tends to be less well established than in the EU15. However, in EU15 countries such as Greece, where the incidence of teleworking is relatively low, telework is expected to become much more widespread in the coming years. It remains to be seen, however, whether the incidence of full-time teleworking will ever increase to the extent that it accounts for a significant proportion of the EU workforce.

Many governments are aware of the potential benefits of teleworking and homeworking and are seeking to promote these ways of working, as part of wider strategies to improve work–life balance, increase female labour market participation and improve access to the labour market for certain groups.

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