



women in

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN TO PROMOTE TELEWORKING AND WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND "MOBILITY"

WP3 'Women in teleworking: EU experience'



infoart



Lifelong Learning Programme

WOMEN IN - Telework for life-work reconciliation in EU: promoting women participation and mobility, ref. 2011-1-ES1-LEO05-36491.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

WORK PACKAGE 3 “WOMEN IN TELEWORKING: EU EXPERIENCE” CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN TO PROMOTE TELEWORKING AND WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION AND “MOBILITY”.

Within the framework of the WOMEN IN Project, work package 3 - “Women in teleworking: EU experience” - aims to approach the topic of teleworking in the context of each of the partner countries in relation to: women’s participation in the labour market and its associated trends: work-life reconciliation policies; women’s use of new technologies; and training needs and qualifications. At the same time the analysis aims at defining the profile of the teleworking woman. INVESLAN (ES) together with INFOART (BG) has been leading the coordination of this work package.

Conclusions, and recommendations for actions to be taken to promote teleworking and women’s participation and “mobility”, have been drawn after a careful and precise analysis of the Austrian, Bulgarian, U.K., Greek, Romanian and Spanish national reports. The national reports have been carried out within the framework of work package 3. The complete final report (WOMEN IN TELEWORKING: COMPARATIVE EU EXPERIENCE), including all of the national experiences and case studies, can be read at and downloaded from: www.women-in.eu

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The national reports demonstrate that the speed and implementation level of teleworking in the analysed countries varies, according to the facts and figures presented. In general, we find that the practice of teleworking is in fact developing, although it is not always implemented formally. Above all, it is likely to be implemented in large or multi-national companies where the parent company adopts teleworking practices. It is also likely to be found in enterprises linked to ICT, or in the public sector.

Another challenge we encounter is identifying the profile of teleworking women. The profile of teleworking women has turned out to be very diverse, including different age groups, professional categories etc. However, we can identify some general features, as the teleworking woman is likely to have the following characteristics: aged 40 with a university degree. The main findings from the national reports reveal that family responsibilities and caring are the main reasons cited for requesting telework. This is unsurprising given that modern motherhood increasingly involves both earning and caring elements, and that caring continues to be linked to female identities and roles.

We meet similar challenges if we turn to analyse the main obstacles to the implementation and promotion of teleworking on a business level. It has to be added that we do not have a single scenario for the implementation of teleworking, as teleworking methods are adapted to meet the requirements of each company. A lack of technical knowledge, poor infrastructure, existing business culture, and a lack of support were identified as the main obstacles in adopting and implementing telework. Furthermore, the current economic crisis encourages and requires companies to look for cost-saving alternatives, and this is where teleworking seems to find its niche, although at the same time, life-work reconciliation programmes do not seem to be a priority for many companies.

We present for consideration, the following recommendations for actions to promote teleworking and women's participation and "mobility".

The following list provides some issues and possible actions that should be considered for telework promotion:

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS		
ISSUE	DESCRIPTION	POSSIBLE ACTION
<i>Prevailing stereotypes and negative connotations regarding teleworking</i>	We are still facing many prevailing stereotypes and negative connotations regarding teleworking, mainly due to a lack of good practices.	Awareness raising campaigns and information facilitation or both, for companies and potential teleworkers in order to promote cultural change. Teleworking should be communicated as a work-life balance programme. Teleworking should be promoted as a means of sustaining women's career paths.
<i>Lack of know-how</i>	Not all companies or employees know that teleworking is an option for them.	Companies need to be made aware of the benefits of teleworking and know how to implement teleworking within their business. There are opportunities within teleworking that need to be highlighted and explored. Training and information for companies might be just as necessary and helpful as it is for employees.
RECOMMENATIONS FOR COMPANIES		
ISSUE	DESCRIPTION	POSSIBLE ACTION
<i>Establishment and start of telework</i>	The introduction of teleworking should be based on pilot projects, and should be evaluated thoroughly before extending this mode of working more generally. As most companies are still inexperienced in the field of teleworking, the introduction to telework should be based on voluntary pilot projects. They should be evaluated by impartial experts in order to create a climate of trust.	Members of the pilot project should not be isolated and they should be recruited from the same department where possible. It seems to be useful to create telework teams from groups who already work together. Otherwise, the risk of an unsuccessful pilot project will be high. A negative evaluation of a pilot project may lead to sceptical attitudes towards teleworking for many years. Training is not only a necessity for teleworkers, but also for the managers remaining within the traditional workplace. Managerial staff have to be trained in the effective use of telecommunications and the development of management by objectives.
<i>Infrastructure</i>	Surprisingly, not all teleworkers receive the equipment they need for their work as teleworkers.	Companies could put in place incentives offering certain infrastructures for teleworkers that are still cost-effective.
<i>Telework and disabled persons</i>	Setting up telework projects for disabled people should be based on collective training.	Employers should be informed about the ways in which telework could respond to their internal organisational issues, as well as the needs of disabled people.

		<p>Potential teleworkers with disabilities should be trained in telecentres to ensure their personal and vocational skills are suitable for the position offered.</p> <p>Feasibility studies and trial periods should be planned in accordance with the particular situation of each teleworker.</p> <p>New markets and services, in which teleworkers can successfully compete, should be identified and developed if their performance becomes restricted</p>
<i>Health standards</i>	<p>Existing health standards must be adapted to include telework.</p> <p>The introduction of telework should be linked to a requirement on both the employer and employee to be thoroughly informed about the health and safety risks of the new work arrangement. This should include the necessary minimal standards for technical equipment, as well as working conditions. Individual internal or external health and safety inspectors could be responsible for the control of these standards.</p>	<p>Health and safety inspectors, and representatives of the works council, should have right of access to the premises of teleworking, with the consent of the teleworkers.</p> <p>The existing national and European legal frameworks of health and safety protection should be checked and, if appropriate, amended to include aspects of health and safety in teleworking. These regulations should refer to working conditions as well as to technical equipment.</p>

<p>Aspects of telework contracts</p>	<p>The technical equipment in the teleworker's home is provided by the employer. It is of the same technical standard as equipment used elsewhere within the company. It is solely for professional use and remains the property of employer. If the teleworking project ends or the employee leaves employment, the equipment must be returned to the employer immediately.</p>	<p>Costs incurred by the teleworker (i.e. electricity, heating, telephone and a proportion of rent payments) are paid by the employer at a flat rate. Travelling expenses between the company and the employee's home, and meal subsidies, are not covered.</p> <p>Teleworking from the home necessitates arrangements should be established as to when the teleworker can be contacted, and how their work performance will be measured. The worker remains an employee, and is protected by: standard employment laws, social security arrangements, etc.</p> <p>Both the employer and employee have the right to initiate or to end a teleworking arrangement within a suitable period of notice. The opportunity to telework is not the right of an employee.</p> <p>The teleworker fulfils the working time arrangements agreed in the contract, which can be shared between the home workplace and the employer's own premises. Electronic monitoring of working times is not allowed without agreement of the works council/trade unions.</p> <p>Data security requires special measures. Data may not be passed to a third party without authorisation.</p> <p>Issues of accident prevention, safety and ergonomics at the place of telework are handled in accordance with the relevant legal requirements operating within the rest of the company.</p> <p>Representatives of the employer or the works council, and data security or health and safety inspectors have the right to access the home workplace, in arrangement with the teleworker.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TELEWORKERS</p>		
<p>ISSUE</p>	<p>DESCRIPTION</p>	<p>POSSIBLE ACTION</p>
<p><i>Necessary leadership skills to manage diverse teams</i></p>	<p>The training of managers and supervisors/team leaders can be identified as an essential element for efficient telework implementation. In Spain for example, the culture of</p>	<p>Training programmes and actions for team leaders provide them with the necessary skills to manage virtual and diverse teams.</p> <p>Managers should be sufficiently trained where the needs of teleworkers are concerned.</p> <p>Managers should be aware of the benefits of teleworking for</p>

	<p>“control” is still prevailing: employees are being strictly controlled and observed. On the contrary, it is proved that teleworkers tend to demonstrate greater loyalty and engagement. The new leaders should be able to motivate and manage virtual teams. The achievements of the workers shall be measured according to the achieved objectives.</p>	<p>employees/employers.</p>
<p><i>Flexibility and security</i></p>	<p>One of the burning issues for teleworkers is the fact that their jobs do not seem to be stable. The question is: How can flexibility be combined with greater stability for teleworkers, without negatively affecting employers?</p>	<p>Define proposals to increase security and stability combined with flexibility. → Collect best practices → Draw up examples Health and wellbeing programmes should be implemented to monitor the impact of teleworking on teleworkers.</p>
<p><i>Participation and motivation</i></p>	<p>The participation in and motivation to telework is still rather low.</p>	<p>The advantages must be underlined and promoted. Potential teleworkers should be enabled to acquire the necessary hard-skills. Teleworkers should be offered time-management and self-motivation training. Teleworkers should be fully informed of the problems of teleworking.</p>
<p><i>Career development</i></p>	<p>Teleworkers often complain that their contribution is overlooked. What can be done to improve the career development of teleworkers?</p>	<p>Offer training which increases the personal and professional “value” of teleworkers, so that their work becomes more valued by employers. (e.g. work-efficiency, flexibility, ICT etc.)</p>
<p><i>Access to qualifications and training</i> <i>Training for teleworkers</i></p>	<p>Teleworkers often do not have access to training in companies or organisations. They are often not formally introduced to the standards (Dos and Don’ts) of teleworking. The introduction of telework should be combined with the development of a new training policy in the company.</p>	<p>Training should be designed (or offered by management) in such a way so that it becomes accessible to all staff members. Establishing standards, guidelines and recommendations as how to implement and execute teleworking could be very helpful for businesses and teleworkers. Teleworkers should receive detailed and continuous training in new technology to support teleworking. The creation of a permanent body to oversee this area, made up of representatives of management, employees, the works council and</p>

	<p>Education and training should be orientated towards self-directed learning. There should be an analysis of the demand for particular qualifications and coaching measures, as well as existing resources. Training should provide the scope for an on-going and mutual professional exchange between employees, and between employees and management.</p>	<p>external specialists, is recommended. Apart from participation in internal training measures, during working hours employees should be granted the right to a minimum period of release each year for external training activities, in order to prevent risks of deskilling. In the case of insufficient in-house training resources, companies should closely cooperate with specialised training centres. In addition these centres could: take over a supervising and support role in the fields of training and personal development for telework, and serve as a competence body for the introduction and implementation of the teleworking processes.</p>
<p><i>Feeling of isolation</i> <i>Personal interaction</i> <i>Social links</i></p>	<p>Due to the nature of their jobs teleworkers are away from the office most of the time. They often feel isolated and might have very loose relationship with their employers. Telework requires new communication and interaction methods between teleworkers, employees and employers.</p>	<p>Promote the idea that a certain degree of time for personal interaction should be foreseen. This strengthens the relationship between worker and employer and helps them feel less isolated. Teleworkers should be given support and guidance to negotiate the boundaries between work and home. The introduction of telework should be based on a thorough evaluation of the social and psychological aspects of decentralised work undertaken using information and communication technologies (ICTs). This should mainly include: a clear definition of the new roles and conditions of interaction between teleworkers and employees in the central office; an analysis of the different communication needs; and the implications for the use of ICT in the working tasks to be fulfilled. This should be done in cooperation with external advisors and with the participation of works council representatives. Regular meetings should be held to allow for the continuous evaluation of any problems arising from teleworkeris communication (both internally within the company and externally). Teleworkers should have the right to access appropriate high-specification communication lines, to ensure easy and direct contact with colleagues. Regular meetings should be held during working hours either in the office or by using two-way telecommunication links to enable the workers and managers to discuss</p>

communication problems.



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