



# Telemanagement Guidelines

## Leading teams in digital working environments

# **Telemanagement guidelines: leading teams in digital working environments**

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Written with the contributions of the Working Group of CEC European Managers on Digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence:

Petra Wagner, Slovenia - Managers' Association of Slovenia (MAS)

Pedro Brito, Portugal - Bank Managers' Union (SNQTB)

Pedro Rola, Portugal - Bank Managers' Union (SNQTB)

Antonio Ferrara, Italy - Italian Managers' Confederation (CIDA)

Nicolas Blanc, France - French Managers' Union (CFE-CGC)

Hannes Sjoblad, Sweden - Swedish Managers' Union (Ledarna)

From CEC European Managers:

Maxime Legrand, France - President

Jean-Philippe Steeger, Belgium - Policy and Project Officer

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## foreword by Maxime Legrand President of CEC European Managers



Telework has existed for more than twenty years. Yet, only a small share of companies and workers had been able to benefit from it. Today, we know that telework success largely due to negotiations and social dialogue, as well as competent and skilled managers and workers.

Then came the pandemic, which changed what years of negotiation could not have achieved. We moved from low shares of telework to 30% of remote and hybrid work in average today, with different variations. We have gained years of negotiation – misfortune is good for something.

We should see telework as an opportunity for organising work. It needs to be integrated within the larger strategy, including the property policy of companies, the capacity to attract new talents, as well as making work-life balance possible.

Telework as a new opportunity implies also considering new elements. For example, since more and more people are choosing this mode of working, we need more than just monitoring the power balance between individual and employer. Today, a key factor is raising the question of organising work collectively.

Who would be in a better position to discuss these issues than managers? In the last two years, managers had to adapt, accompany their teams, while ensuring business activity and development. However, we believe they also need guidance and support in making telemanagement a leadership success.

It is up to the managers to establish and secure clear objectives for telework, to make sure that they are communicated, understood and implemented as part of the company culture. The European managers are ready to

handle this, but it needs to be part of the future framework on telework that managers have the necessary training of skills, including continuous training on digital issues and cybersecurity.

“

Our report gives visibility to managers' telemanagement experiences, contributes to telework negotiations and provides concrete guidance.

”

Based on CEC's values of pragmatism and professionalism, we wanted to give visibility to managers' concrete telemanagement experience from the ground, prepare CEC's contribution to the EU social partners' negotiation on telework, while providing leaders and managers with relevant information, leadership practices and tools for your everyday telemanagement.

I hope these Telemanagement Guidelines will support you in seizing the opportunities offered by this new way of thinking and organising work. I would like to thank all our member organisations and experts for the fruitful conversations that made these guidelines possible. We wish you a pleasant and enriching reading.

## introduction

**The new world of work is here to stay. With the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, what had been previously thought as impossible has been done in record time. Workers and managers across many sectors started working in remote or hybrid settings. Digitally supported working environments have become common. A globalised digital economy requires leaders, policy-makers and social partners to rethink telework.**

At the same time, a wave of resignations and unprecedented mental health problems have put the topic of work purpose and smarter ways of working at the top of leaders' agendas. Surveys have shown that most employees want a balance between remote digital flexibility and human contacts at the workplace. Such a hybrid workplace culture also requires a shift in management and leadership to become future-fit.

Against that background, responsible leadership is key for designing workplaces in a way to promote employee well-being, organisational success and more sustainable impact.

The current guidelines provide leaders and managers with relevant information on telework in Europe, hands-on advice for telemanagement and further resources to make telemanagement a success.

“Responsible leadership is key for well-being, success and impact.”

67.9929

3.8511

91.9426

01

telework and  
telemangement  
in Europe today

# State of the art: telemangement in Europe

With the introduction of portable personal computers and mobile phones, telework and telemangement became a possibility. The phenomenon has over the last two decades grown continuously in relation to improvements in connectivity, cheaper and more portable computers, and a growing toolset of remote work solutions.

## Defining telework

***“Telework is any form of organising and/or performing work using information technology, in the context of an employment contract/relationship, in which work, which could also be performed at the employer’s premises, is carried out away from those premises on a regular basis.”*** Eurofound 2022

In 2020, The Covid-19 pandemic became a massive accelerator for telework. As a culmination of a long emerging trend, remote work and hybrid work are now a normalised and accepted feature of professional life. Today we see employers advertising new, remote and hybrid jobs as a matter of routine, because they know that this is something that professionals are asking for.

Teleworking has been welcomed both by employers and by large cohorts of professionals. Enabling it has often contributed to generating higher morale and motivation. For employees, they get greater control of their workday in terms of hours and breaks and save time from commuting. For employers, it gives greater access to talent, saves cost in office facilities, and leads to a happier workforce. When morale and motivation are high, management becomes easy.

## The challenges for managers

For leaders and team managers the transition to hybrid and remote workplaces has not been as simple as for other professionals. Working with remote and distributed teams has its own unique challenges and the brunt of solving them falls on the sometimes not well enough prepared and well enough equipped managers.

Challenges with remote teams do not just include language, culture barriers and working across time zones. More profound concerns are communication, coordination, and resource accessibility. Matters such as the health and well-being are harder for a manager to understand when persons never meet. Similarly, productivity becomes harder to track for tasks that do not easily lend themselves to simple KPIs. Information security becomes more complicated as team members may be active in spaces where they can be both overhead and their digital communications may be insecure.

## **What telemanagement is about**

In these guidelines, we use 'telemanagement' for hybrid management of remote and onsite teams and digitally supported workflows. This management in hybrid working environments has different challenges and requires a different set of tools than traditional management.

Management is not just about coordinating and monitoring the completion of tasks, but also about building culture and cohesion in a team or organisation. Management is about relationships, it's about trust, engagement, and inspiration. Management is about facilitating the transfer of knowledge, skills, and values both vertically and horizontally within an organisation.

Lastly, advancing sustainable leadership can help to realise the potential of telemanagement for contributing to greater organisational success and a positive impact on the organisation's economic, social and environmental environment.



# facts and figures

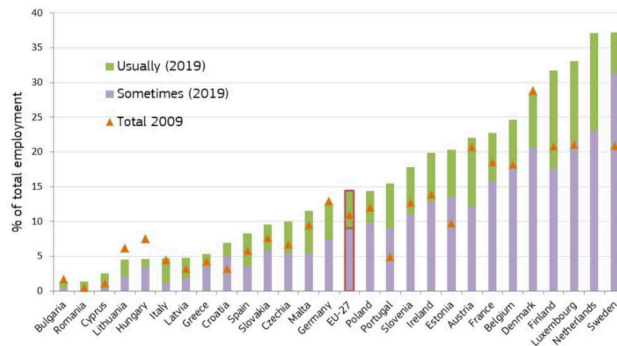
**30%**

Hybrid or remote work among EU workers

[Eurofound 2022](#)

## General upward trend in hybrid working

In almost all EU countries, there has been a rather rapid growth in the share of employees that work in hybrid settings over the last decade. In many cases, the Coronavirus pandemic has accelerated the implementation of remote work in organisations. However, there remain noticeable differences in the uptake of hybrid work in the EU. Differences in the industrial structure and culture are main factors explaining the varying prevalence of telework across EU countries.



**Figure 4.** Prevalence of telework across EU Member States.

Source: Eurostat, LFS. Variable code: lfsa\_ehomp.

## Remote and hybrid work prevalence depends on the sector, region and occupation

Among sectors, agriculture and fishing; household activities; Accommodation and food services had the lowest prevalence in telework and mobile work. Information and communication, Professional and scientific activities; and Financial services counted the highest share of workers. After professionals, the managerial occupational category counts among the professions with the highest share of Telework and Mobile Work arrangements.

## Post-Covid backlash

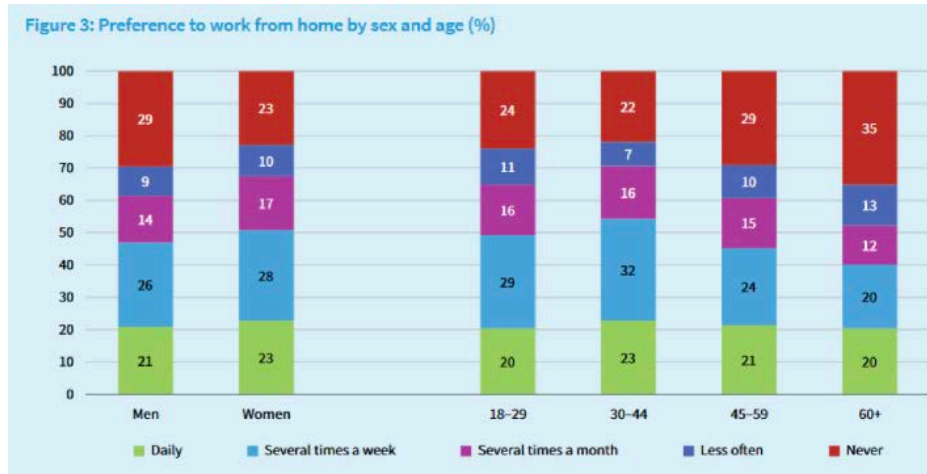
In the summer of 2020, 34% of EU workers surveyed worked exclusively from home, which decreased to only 12% by 2022. The return to former work habits seems to have continued as restrictions were lifted.

source: [Eurofound 2020](#)

# facts and figures

## Catering to workers different preferences for working arrangements

There is a big variety of remote work preferences, with remote options being more popular among women and younger generations. [Eurofound 2022](#)



## Opportunities of remote working

Workers appreciate the opportunities remote work offers them, whether from home or from other locations. [Evidence suggests](#) that many workers value higher levels of flexibility, fewer distractions, less stress and more productivity for certain tasks.

## (Mental) health pandemic

The pandemic and its related restriction measures have been associated with a decline in mental well-being, particularly for young people. [More than 50% of the EU population](#) is at risk of depression and more than a fourth of the population felt depressed in 2022. [Stress, anxiety and headaches/eye strain were found to be the most prevalent symptoms](#) among regular teleworkers in the EU.

example: the [EndStress campaign](#) for instance advocates for better protection from psychosocial health risks.

## Telework challenges

[Overload of information](#), lacking boundaries between private and professional life, stress and burnout, maintaining good relationships with colleagues, as well as high degrees of presenteeism count among the [greatest challenges managers face in organising telework](#).



02

framework  
conditions for  
telemangement

**To make telemanagement and remote working arrangements work in practice, there are a number of factors managers need to account for. Setting constructive framework conditions for the digital working environment is key to promoting managers' and workers' performance, well-being and positive impact. A set of basic common rules on telemanagement should be agreed upon in teams, before individual agreements define specific modalities for individual workers. The following framework conditions are to be promoted by leaders in private and public sector organisations.**

### **Culture of trust**

Successful telemanagement requires building or restoring a culture of trust in the workplace and promoting the agency of and cooperation among workers. Rather than a « command-and-control » approach (e.g. algorithmic surveillance), it's about listening to and empowering workers to achieve agreed objectives through adequate means. For instance, workplaces can experiment with remote and hybrid work arrangements to evaluate the experience, needs and areas of improvement of such arrangements.

### **Performance management**

Organisations shall define what makes remote and hybrid work a success by setting clear objectives and exploring purposeful means with workers and stakeholders, wherever possible. Productivity tools can run counter performance and risk becoming an end by themselves, eventually slowing down the whole organisation.

### **Practical rules**

Telework policies shall be practical, cost-sensitive and reflect the preferences of both workers and employers, ensuring both time for individual agency and collective team-building. Cultural differences and the diversity of the workforce are an asset to be developed by inclusive leadership practices. Employment contracts should reflect the way remote work is organised and be revised if substantial changes occur.

## **Promoting social dialogue**

Telework policies shall be established with the involvement of workers, managers, employers and potential other relevant stakeholders. By designing inclusive processes, there are greater chances for remote work arrangements to work in practice. The Framework Agreement on Digitalisation adopted by the European Social Partners from 2020 can help to negotiate an agreement at a local level, it addresses the modalities of connecting and disconnecting for example.

## **Healthy workplaces**

Leaders have a due diligence role for promoting health and well-being in digital and hybrid workplaces, and for ensuring that psychosocial health risks are prevented. Telework policies shall include ways to promote workers' psychosocial health, participation in community and family life, access to and time spent in nature and/or calm spaces.

## **Making teleworking in the EU attractive**

The EU shall become an attractive telework destination for international talent by harmonising rules, improving infrastructure and promoting quality of telemanagement and telework. Social security systems shall be better coordinated to create a level-playing field for telework in the EU and avoid unfair competition.

## **Legislative obligations**

Start-ups and small companies should face less formal obligations than larger companies when it comes to collective rules and public policies on telework, unless negotiated at company level and in accordance with other applicable rules in place.



03

# leadership for telemangement

A sustainable approach  
for hybrid workplaces

**A sustainable workplace is characterised by sustainable working conditions and a sustainable impact. As defined by the three dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this impact covers the economic, ecological and social dimension of sustainability. Achieving that impact requires sustainable leadership.**

## Sustainable Leadership for purposeful telemanagement

For telemanagement to be successful, the way the work is organised and its impact (or performance) need to be sustainable. The “Sustainable Leadership Model”, developed by CEC European Managers, caters to the needs of managers in making workplaces more sustainable. The following paragraphs describe the model, as a change management tool, in the context of telemanagement.

### Sustainable Leadership Model by Sustainable Leaders 5 levels for transition know-how: from purpose to action



## 1. Purpose of telemanagement

Leaders of companies and organisations need to have a clear purpose for the digital strategy in general and the implementation of telework and telemanagement in particular. This includes translating the purpose into clear success indicators that are made transparent to employees. Today, there can be contradictions between controlling the work process for productivity (e.g. measured in number of emails sent) and work performance or outcome (which is often more context specific). An inclusive way of defining the purpose has usually greater chances of translating into real action, boosted by motivated employees.

## **2. systemic understanding of working environment**

Hybrid workplaces are complex environments to manage. Managers operate within a digital ecosystem consisting of IT infrastructure, a physical workplace, the employees and the wider environment of the business or organisation. It is therefore crucial for managers to understand the specific ecosystem in which they operate. For instance, a workplace culture can influence how workers experience and perform in a hybrid setting. Also legislation and day-to-day practices (like taking breaks) can influence the working environment.

## **3. activating resources (legal, human, infrastructure etc.)**

Once the hybrid working environment is understood, managers can identify and activate different resources to ensure telemanagement success. Legally, that means ensuring that legislative requirements are met, including the safeguard of health and safety standards. Also the ICT infrastructure is important to enable smooth workflows among workers. Importantly, workers may need up- and reskilling to fit the requirements of hybrid working. It makes sense to include teams and individual contributors in defining which resources are best for them.

## **4. developing telemanagement competencies**

Learning how to be a successful leader in a hybrid setting is not a given. It requires leadership competences next to practical digital skills to manage digital tools. Managers need to learn how to manage teams in hybrid settings. This includes professional communication and collaboration skills. In digital environments, the role of clear and direct communications become ever more important. With less non verbal communication and more potential misunderstandings, leaders need to be particularly aware of dynamics and cultivate a higher degree of emotional intelligence.

## **5. leading telemanagement in practice**

The day-to-day management of telework covers a range of activities. First of all, trustful relationships and regular communications with employees need to be maintained. Team meetings in a hybrid setting may need more preparation to ensure they are purposeful and effective. Also the social dialogue among employers, managers and workers needs to be organised to deal with various issues. Finally, the concrete use of ICT tools has to be organised and supported. As a manager it is crucial to be in a listening posture, to be flexible and adapt to the needs of the team(s).





04

telemangement  
principles and  
tools

# Designing telemanagement systems: principles and guidance on telemanagement

**The “human factor” of telemanagement is key to its success. As evidenced in studies on digital change processes, the factors of leadership, competences, and cooperation capacity are key to achieving the organisation’s digitally supported objectives.**

**Building trustful relationships, leading purposefully and learning how to achieve greater impact in a digital working environment are indeed also key to telemanagement. The principles covered by these guidelines can help in assessing the current state of the art of remote and hybrid work and inspire new conversations and measures.**

## **Purposeful meetings**

- purpose-driven and inclusive way of facilitating digital meetings;
- practising active verbal and non-verbal listening during meeting;
- holding space for fruitful conversations and following-up on meetings;
- exploring group rules and “rituals” during meetings;
- whenever possible, inviting workers to regular presential meetings or community events for checking-in, team-building and celebrating successes

## **Healthy workplace culture**

- understand the needs of teleworkers in terms of autonomy, being supervised and accompanied, participating in meetings etc.
- respecting and working with cultural differences and communalities;
- managing the time and workflows transparently;
- cultivating mindfulness about unconscious biases, stereotypes and harmful behaviours;
- creating a constructive feedback culture;

## **Leading with trust**

- Being available and actively listening to needs of team
- Sharing your learnings from mistakes instead of hiding them;
- Finding the adequate mix of autonomy and team work;

- overcoming the “illusion of control”;
- Focussing on work outcomes by setting clear team objectives
- regular check-ins on progress and challenges
- Build competences of employees

### **Promoting psychosocial health**

- catering to mental, social and biophysical needs of people, e.g.: moments of silence, reduction of distractions, outdoor times, healthy food, moments of conviviality etc.
- learning to create spaces for conscious conversations about emotions, needs and expectations (e.g. through Non-Violent Communication)
- designing healthy workspaces: ergonomic equipment, air quality, presence of natural elements, personalised space arrangements etc.
- assessing and preventing psychosocial risks with a psychosocial health plan

### **Clear and conscious communications**

- Keep your messages as clear and concise as possible
- Draw a line between consistently supporting and being a micromanager
- Make space for introverts and extraverts and other diverse personality traits
- Ensure “face presence” meetings either through in-person video calls or on-site
- Avoid over-communication with the whole team as it can lead to poor work-life balance
- Understand the difference between synchronous and asynchronous communication. You also need to decide the right protocols and the right time to use both of them.

### **Providing ICT equipment**

- Established strategy and timeline for Digital ecosystem infrastructure
- Must be available to all workers in remote and hybrid work
- The equipment must be secure and safe
- Employees have proper learning and competences for using it
- Consider privacy challenges in the organisation of remote work from a user perspective
- Clear policy on ICT and energy cost compensation in contract or agreement when relevant

# Digital telemanagement tools

**There are a lot of digital management tools that are already in widespread use. They belong to a few different categories: communications tools, video platforms, project management platforms, cloud and data sharing services. Our selection of tools gives you an overview.**

Some examples include :

**Teleconferencing tools** such as Zoom, Hangout, Teams, GMeet, Skype, Webex, and similar are an essential part of the remote management toolbox. Easy to note, the ones mentioned here are all American owned. For users looking for greater privacy, open source based Mattermost and Jitsi offer an alternative.

**Data/cloud hosting solutions:** AWS, Google, IBM, Microsoft Azure, or Dropbox support constituting a crucial infrastructure for the remote work ecosystem. Germany-founded Nextcloud and Dutch-based The Good Cloud stand out as being a cloud service providers with privacy as a founding principle. Next Cloud is popular with a lot of European companies and governments, as it does not share data outside of the EU and is therefore not subject to the US Cloud Act.

## **Project Management and coordination tools**

Trello - The leading project management tool has 50 million active users worldwide. Trello is a general purpose and easy to use project management tool. It allows managers to create tasks and guide them through a customisable lean process. By creating cards with tasks and rearranging them, you can delegate assignments, track progress, collect and store information, as well as plan and organise work processes. A good alternative is Mural.

Basecamp - Early in the game, Basecamp has provided remote work solutions since 2004 and has 16 million users. It is a web-based collaboration tool designed for team task management. Due dates, calendaring, and to-do lists help users set their priorities and organise their work based on the urgency of the assigned tasks.

Asana - Asana is a project management platform tailored for remote work and distributed teams' coordination, with more than 1.3 million paying users. Features include timelines and project boards, where assignments are built into bigger projects which helps team members structure their work. It allows managers to track progress and see who is responsible for specific project parts.

Slack - Slack, with more than 10 million daily users, has come to be a synonym of team-based communications in the post-email era. Slack provides a chat/channel communication tool to keep large and small teams connected and allows users to tune in and review conversations in a way that was never possible with email.

# Zoom on Microsoft Viva

**Microsoft Viva, launched in 2021, deserves a section of its own due to the complete dominance of MS Windows and MS Office in the European professional desktop operating systems market. With a 78,7% market share (July 2022) Microsoft has a disproportionate influence on European professionals. MS Viva is a feature of the MS office 365 package and an extension of MS Teams. Described as "an employee experience platform that brings together communications, knowledge, learning, resources, and insights". According to MS, Viva already has more than 10 million users.**

The management feature in Viva is called Microsoft Viva Goals, a "goal-setting and management solution that aligns teams to your organization's strategic priorities, driving results and a thriving business". Viva Goals is designed to enable employees and managers to organize and track their goals through OKRs (Objectives and Key Results).

Microsoft Viva has been criticised for infringing on user privacy. The tool for example reads email communications and using machine learning language recognition picks tasks and reminders based on what is written in the emails. The system comments on whether the individual user has been inactive "welcome back, did you have a good rest" or if the same user has been active at off hours, in which case the user is encouraged to investigate their work-life balance priorities. This is a fascinating demonstration of a first step towards using artificial systems as managers. It is worth paying close attention.

Organisations like [ETUI](#) recommend regulatory measures.

## European telemanagement tools

**Beyond the American giants, there are many European challengers in different remote work niches. Some noteworthy ones are listed here.**

Admincontrol, founded in Oslo, Norway in 2005, provides solutions for managing boards, management teams, investment processes etc. Since 2017 a part of Norway-based Visma Group. Has 40.000 active users in six European counties.

Franz, founded in Vienna, Austria in 2016 is an app that centralises all notifications in one place for easier access and better visualisation. It addresses the modern-day dilemma of the multitude of different messaging platforms, which leads to too many notifications and the trouble of locating old messages.

Hey Space, founded in Wroclaw, Poland in 2018, is a chat and task management solution for teams. It is designed to integrate different solutions and centralise all information on one platform.

Paymo, founded in Oradea, Romania in 2008, is a task and project management tool. It is a platform that allows teams, small businesses, and freelancers to manage projects and tasks, track work time and bill clients from the same interface. Has more than 150,000 users on more than 100 countries.

Pipedrive, founded in Tallinn, Estonia in 2010, is a CRM platform with more than 100,000 companies as customers.

Qatalog, founded in London, UK in 2019, is a virtual workspace SaaS tool, that aims to be a single hub framework for remote teams.

Teamtaylor, founded in Stockholm, Sweden in 2013, is a recruitment and applicant tracking system that today has more than 95,000 users in more than 90 countries.

Toggl, founded in Tallin, Estonia in 2007, is a set of tools built to elevate team productivity. Toggl Track is a web-based time tracking tool that lets users track how they spend working days and analyse productivity. Toggl Plan is an online project management software tool for small teams.

Todoist, founded in 2007 in Barcelona, Spain, is a productivity app for task management and coordination that currently has 1.5 million users from 195 countries.



05

creating a  
European  
telework space

# Making Europe attractive to teleworkers

**A digitalised world economy requires the European Union to design solutions that make it an attractive remote, hybrid and mobile work space. This can have positive ripple effects on innovation, health and well-being, as well as business development in the EU.**

The main challenge today consists in creating a real European remote work space where workers are free to move without significant barriers. The number of cross-border workers is still limited in the EU but it could increase significantly due to remote working opportunities.

To seize the opportunities for workers, managers and employers, there is a need for further harmonisation and better coordination of EU regulations and rules. We will take a closer look at the questions of social security, taxation and the EU Framework Agreement on Telework.

## **Framework Agreement on Telework**

The first Framework Agreement on Telework had already been concluded by the European social partners in 2002. It represents a landmark in EU industrial relations. Already back then, it was agreed that remote workers should be provided the possibility to regularly meet colleagues on-site and be informed about developments in the company / organisation.

It sets some principles that are still valid today in the areas of:

- voluntary nature of teleworking;
- employment conditions;
- data protection;
- privacy;
- equipment;
- health and safety;
- organisation of work;
- training of teleworkers;
- the collective rights of teleworkers.

The world of work has changed since then. For this reason, the framework agreement is being revised and updated according to the current labour requirements with a particular focus on social mobility of workers and the new "digital nomads". A new framework agreement is set to be concluded by European social partners in 2023.



## **Social Security**

In the field of social security, EU rules define the concept of cross-border worker for the purpose of determining in which Member State they are entitled to social benefits. The EU definition in the social security field covers both employed and self-employed persons.

Also in this case the regulations should have to be thoroughly assessed and clarified taking into account the case of teleworkers who decide to base his/her activity in a State Member of the EU different from the one where he/she signed the employment contract.

## **Creating a European telework space**

We need to make telework easier and more attractive in Europe, also by contribute to our competitiveness by attracting and retaining talent. Currently, in the field of taxation there exist no rules at EU level regarding the definition of cross-border workers, the division of taxation rights between Member States or the tax rules to be applied.

Income earned by a cross-border worker may be taxed in one or both of the Member States concerned, depending on the tax arrangements. In the latter case, tax paid in the Member State where the work is carried out would normally be taken into account when determining the tax liability in the Member State of residence, in order to avoid double taxation.

With taxation being a national-level competence, the EU should find ways to encourage making telework and professional mobility easier under such circumstances. Importantly, this should not increase competition among Member States or lead to more social dumping.

# Collective agreements on telework and telemanagement

**The rapid evolution of the digitalised world of work requires a mode of governance that is flexible and close to the needs of the involved stakeholders. Social dialogue between workers, managers and employers has proven its strengths and resilience in times of economic crises. No other mode of governing industrial relations is as close to the working reality than social dialogue.**

In this section, we will take a look at the telework agreements of social partners at European, national and company level. Thinking these levels together in a complementary way is key to create a greater level-playing field for telework, while adjusting to the specific context at the workplace.

## **EU telework agreement by the European social partners**

The European social partners, including CEC European Managers, have concluded a first telework agreement in 2002. This agreement had already covered the issues of workers' privacy, health and well-being, as well as the right to training.

In 2023, the European social partners are set to agree on a new European Framework Agreement on telework. This agreement shall ensure that workers are protected from algorithmic surveillance, psychosocial health risks and gender and diversity-specific discrimination.

Furthermore, unlike the 2002 agreement, the collective dimension of telework is to be covered. That means that workers have the right to involve workers' representatives, negotiate telework modalities together, and accompany general changes in work organisations. Also workers that cannot benefit from telework shall be covered to compensate for missed opportunities.

## **National agreement on telework in France**

A national interprofessional agreement covering telework has been agreed by French social partners, including CEC member CFE-CGC, on 26 November 2020. The preamble refers to the Autonomous Agreement on Digitalisation, negotiated by CEC European Managers. The European social dialogue can therefore be considered relevant for other levels of governance.

The agreement foresees that social partners shall negotiate collective agreements on telework at company level. It also includes the possibility to establish minimum requirements for telework, making communication and collaboration tools available to workers, as well as protocols to ensure data protection and confidentiality. A novelty was the specific mention of the role of trust-based management in organising telework.

The French Interprofessional Agreement stipulates that:

- Managers shall establish clear objectives for telework
- Managers shall build capacities in identifying vulnerable or discriminated populations
- Managers shall be trained on digital issues, including cybersecurity
- Reliable and trusted contact points shall be established for people that feel isolated due to telework

[Read the agreement](#)

## **European telework charter at BNPParibas**

The charter covers 133000 employees in Europe and defines the modalities of telework in the company. The charter was chosen to respond to remain flexible and adaptive. It is seen as a step forward for both workers and employers, as both sides are engaged in developing new forms of working.

The agreement foresees up to 50% of remote working; diverse possibilities for ICT cost coverage of workers; as well as evaluation and follow-up criteria.



06

conclusions  
and outlook on  
telemangement

**We can conclude that hybrid and remote work has become the new normal for many. We will never go back. Managers need to learn to operate within it, and lawmakers, industry associations and trade unions need to adopt rules and policies to accommodate the new normal.**

**Managers face multiple challenges: being professionally successful in managing their teams and organisations, as well as protecting their own health, privacy, and workplace rights. To make telemanagement a success, the CEC working group on digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence has gathered its insights and four main conclusions.**

### **1. What we need is not more tools, but guidance on tools**

The need for powerful tools for remote management is not a matter of dispute. In conversations, the challenge is most often that users are “drowning in tools”. The sheer number of solutions is overwhelming. It is crucial to pick the right set of tools for the organisation. Meetings, chats, file sharing, internal and external comms, and daily tasks all require different tools. And once an organisation has committed to a solution, it is hard to change. That’s why we need clear leadership and inclusive processes to ensure tools are being used purposefully.

### **2. We need human leadership instead of technology blindness**

It may be tempting to blindly trust what seem to be powerful technology solutions for optimising workplaces. But we should not let technology and those who design it control how we work with other people. We believe humans are more than work resources, and there is a real need to stand up for the human dimension. There must be room for human interaction and human dignity.

In light of the onslaught of digital tools, this requires fresh thinking around work methodology for managers, aligned to the company culture and strategy. Being a remote manager means i.a. giving increased degrees of freedom to your team members. “You cannot control them, so you need to enable them to be productive and healthy.” Making sure the tools have a purpose, the work has an objective, listening to needs and concerns, thinking ahead, and catering to the human behind the work role are all important features of remote management.

### **3. The European way needs to become the sustainable way**

Many of the remote management technologies and solutions that we encounter are built by US and Chinese companies. Looking at the US, We know there are differences with the EU on employees’ rights, holidays and terminations, privacy and data protection, among others.

There are certain values we hold dear as European citizens and managerial organisations across Europe gathered within CEC European Managers. Paramount are employees’ rights, privacy, and sustainability.

As we increase our dependence on digital tools, privacy is inevitably a factor to be designed-in from the beginning. We need to analyse and be critical of how these tools are introduced and applied, where the data ends up, and we need to take this perspective to the public debate.

Without prejudice, we favour digital solutions that safeguard the values covered by the European social model, human and labour rights, as well as economic and environmental sustainability. This way, a sustainable digital world can become Europe's competitive advantage.

#### **4. Human dignity, trust and outcome-orientation outcompete digital surveillance**

Is there reason to be concerned about the relevance of managers and leaders in the light of emerging machine learning systems who can either support or outcompete managers? And how beneficial are algorithmic management systems? In a short-term perspective, digital solutions that track tasks, work hours and plan activities could improve the productivity of managers. It could even be that digital tracking is stronger in a remote work setting than in an office setting since everything passes through the systems.

Tools like productivity scores could however undermine the work of a manager if they have to replace management by trust. After all there is no evidence that such tools which are only partial indicators, improve productivity for the mid- to long-term. Obscure algorithms put in place by companies like Microsoft and Google shall not become managers of everyone. A new Microsoft tool predicting if people will quit by analysing emails is seen as problematic. Another example is a face recognition technology auto-censored by Microsoft itself. Importantly, control management software that restrict employee agency also represent a potentially fundamental violation of employees workplace rights and the right to privacy.

It is also the manager's business to take care not to lose responsibility and to reap the good things brought by AI. There can be indeed a potential for fairer treatments in certain settings. We all have to gain from exploiting the benefits of AI. Moreover, the discourse of truth makes us say that it is a question of competitiveness and at the end of survival for them and the entire European economy.

This is why CEC European Managers will launch the next step of its working group on artificial intelligence, to raise awareness and share best practices, and why we invite leaders to educate themselves on the subject, to make their boards aware of the importance of investing in AI (acculturation does not happen overnight) to keep control of decisions and to ensure that intelligence assists them in repetitive tasks or analysis while leaving them more time for themselves and their teams.

## 5. Telework calls for new leadership by trained and engaged managers

Telework is part of the new ways of working. The workers appreciate the opportunities and flexibility that is offered by a technology that allows work to happen from different locations and Eurofound statistics from 2022 shows that telework is especially popular and in demand by members of the female workforce and by the younger generations. The development of a solid digital infrastructure, new technologies and possibilities. The expectations of the new generations and by the female workforce has turned telework into an unavoidable premise of working life. According to some surveys even up till one third of the workers are willing to quit their jobs, if telework is not an option.

The managerial challenges described earlier on in these guidelines shows clearly that the role of the manager is more important than ever in a working reality where everyone is not meeting each other at the workplace every day. To uphold the company culture, to create awareness of the company visions, the strategies, the right team spirit, telework shall revolve around the manager and the kind of leadership exercised.

Leadership and management efforts must on the one hand focus on the people working off-site. Making sure that they feel included, seen and offered a communication that is dosed correctly. On the other hand leadership and management efforts must involve focus on creating an on-site working space that is regarded as attractive and developing place to turn to.

There is no doubt that this dual leadership role is putting new demands on the shoulders of the managers. European managers are capable and time and time again they have shown their ability to adapt and accommodate the needs. This shall include the tasks of handling the challenges of a smooth integration of telework in the company routines.

As the social partners of EU are negotiating a new set of regulatory framework for telework, it is important that this framework is observant of and includes the manager and the managerial role and needs. These needs includes a variety of managerial tools such as communication skills, knowledge of stress related factors and how to ensure a healthy working environment as well as technological insights and digital skills as a resource of managers.

There are sound reasons behind telework being part of the negotiations between the social partners. And there are sound reasons to invest in the offering of training programs for managers on this. It is to the benefit of the employers to have competent and rightly trained managers. It is to the benefit of the workers to have an understanding manager to turn to and it is to the benefit of managers to have a solid platform to act on as bridge builder between the needs of the employers and the needs of the workers.



CEC European Managers  
The Voice of European managers - since 1951.

Rue de la Loi 81a  
1040 Brussels, Belgium  
European Union

[www.cec-managers.org](http://www.cec-managers.org)  
[info@cec-managers.org](mailto:info@cec-managers.org)