

Economic and Social Council

Topic 3: Introducing and promoting remote working and Digitalization in the workplace

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Index

1. Definition of key terms:	1
2. Introduction:	2
3. Background information:	2
4. Major countries involved:	4
5. UN involvement	5
6. Bibliography	6

1. Definition of key terms:

Teleworking: the activity of working at home, while communicating with your office by phone or email is called teleworking.

Digitalization: Digitalization is the use of digital technologies to change a business model and provide new revenue and value-producing opportunities; it is the process of moving to a digital business.

World Bank: it is an international organization that offers developmental assistance to middle-income and low-income countries.

IWG global Workspace Survey: an agency that discover how business-leaders think the world of work will change in the coming decade, and identify key business issues and workplace trends.



2. Introduction:

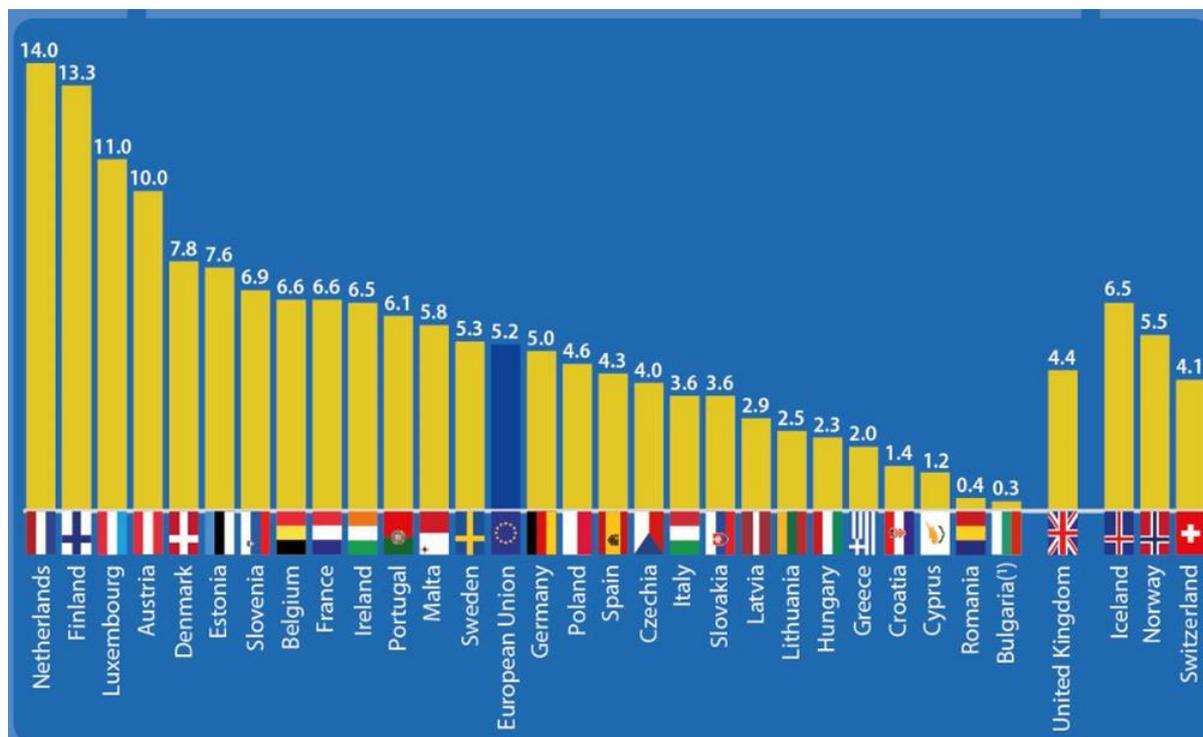
Today we are always connected, instant access environment has blurred the lines between the physical office and the place where work actually happens. The workplace becomes truly digital; employees are communicating and collaborating in unprecedented ways. Organizations are responding to the new remote working, and support changes in working style to enable employees to work better on social networks. They unify offline and online communications by keeping their mobile devices access to tools and corporate information, focus on employee experience, allowing flexibility and personalization of their work time and support virtual work environments that allow employees to stay connected in distributed and virtualized work locations. As technology and networks become more robust and there's a growth in computer speed employees become more comfortable with working on their devices rather than coming into office.

3. Background information:

“remote working” has recently been mentioned during the COVID 19 emergency phase of the pandemic. It has been mentioned has a method of being able to carry out the work performance as a remote service, which has proved to be a solution to the continuity of the job. Coronavirus measures have accelerated the transition to remote working, for example with the proportion of Europeans who work remotely from 5% to 40% and it is unlikely to return to pre-pandemic levels; remote working is likely to continue. A switch to working from home could have advantages for employees; they may gain more leisure time and better work-life balance. However, a recent report suggests that social isolation is an issue.

Retraining is also an issue since many people don't have the skills needed to work remotely: the labour force has very limited digital skills or none at all. Big companies are already stepping forward to help unemployed people acquire digital skills and will start to provide training over the next 18 months as part of their coronavirus recovery efforts.

The world of work before COVID-19 had plenty of inequalities and problems. Only 57 percent of people of working age (3.3 billion people, 1.3 billion women and 2,0 billion men) were employed. 188 million were unemployed. More than 85 percent of African workers were informally employed and this was also the reality for the majority of people in Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. Informal employment was particularly high among women (62 %), and dominant in agriculture and services.



This is a graphic that shows the percentage of people working at home before the crisis and the lockdowns. In the European union for example just 5.2% of employed worked from home.

When COVID-19 arrived, necessary measures were needed to slow down the spreading of the virus and to save and protect lives. Lockdowns and other restrictive measures to contain the pandemic have had a devastating impact on already weak labour markets, as well as production and consumption. Altogether 94 percent of the world's workers are living in countries with some type of workplace closure measures in place. Where social protection systems were weak or absent, millions of people have been left without an income.

Unemployment is already very common in many countries. Hours worked in all countries and regions have fallen dramatically by 10.7 % in the second quarter of 2020 relative to the last quarter of 2019, which is equivalent to 305 million full-time jobs (assuming a 48-hour working week). The pandemic has exposed inequalities and social fissures in societies that are hitting hard the most vulnerable and marginalized groups. As a result, multidimensional poverty and inequality are likely to increase significantly. Revised estimates from the World Bank suggest that the number of people living in poverty could increase by 70-100 million, which would be the first increase in poverty since 1998, from 632 million people in 2019.¹⁷ The number of those remaining poor even though they work is estimated to increase by up to 35 million.



Women have been hit especially hard, working in many of the most critically affected sectors, while also carrying the greatest burden of increasing levels of unpaid care work. Young people, persons with disabilities, and many others are facing tremendous difficulties. Many small and medium-sized enterprises may not survive. Massive unemployment and loss of income from COVID-19 are further eroding social cohesion and destabilizing countries and regions socially, politically and economically. Many companies and workers have adapted in innovative ways to the changing circumstances. For example, millions have moved overnight to working online, in many cases with surprising success. But the most vulnerable are at risk of becoming even more vulnerable, and poor countries and communities risk falling even further behind. The pandemic exposed tremendous shortcomings, fragilities and fault lines.

It is needed immediate support for at-risk workers, enterprises, jobs and incomes to avoid closures, job losses and income decline. Then, greater focus on both health and economic activity after lockdowns ease, with workplaces that are safe.

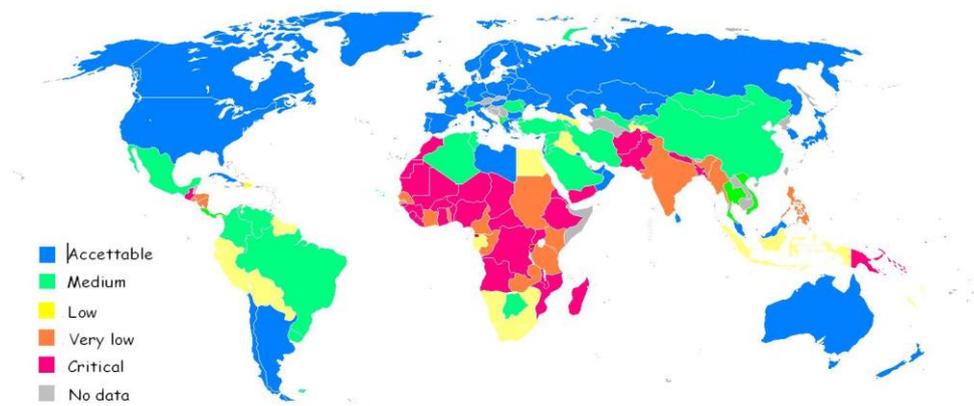
4. Major countries involved:

Digital wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few US- and China-based platforms. The gap between the under-connected and the hyper-digitalized countries will widen and worsen inequalities if unaddressed. Concerted global efforts are required to spread the rapidly expanding digital economy's gains to the many people who currently reap little benefit from it.

Wealth creation in the digital economy is highly concentrated in the United States and China, with the rest of the world, especially countries in Africa and Latin America, trailing considerably far behind, according to the report. The **United States** and **China** account for 75% of all patents related to blockchain technologies, 50% of global spending on the Internet of Things (IoT), more than 75% of the cloud computing market and as much as 90% per cent of the market capitalization value of the world's 70 largest digital platform companies. In **Africa**, access to the internet remains out of reach for most people in the continent, with only 22% reporting having access in 2017. Too few citizens have digital IDs or transaction accounts – locking them out of access to critical services and e-commerce. Businesses need to utilize digitally-centered business models to connect with the hundreds of millions of customers previously out of reach due to geography or low income.



It's not clear exactly what proportion of the workforce was allowed to telecommute before Covid-19 emerged in China. Fifty-one percent of businesses in China say they have a flexible workspace policy, according to the 2019 IWG Global Workspace Survey; the corresponding figure for the US is 69%. Yet flexibility is defined differently by different organisations: to some it can mean simply the ability to control your hours or manage your own workload. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Chinese workers use (or are allowed to use) home working considerably less than the US, for example, where figures from Gallup showed that by 2017 43% of workers worked remotely at least some of the time. Although Chinese work culture might be more conservative, in technological terms it is well set up for working from home. This picture shows the level of globalization around the world. As you can see the USA, Australia and Europe are the acceptable ones.



5. UN involvement

The United Nations are aware of the dramatic situation in most countries. Regional and national effort is needed to create decent work for all. With smart and timely action at all levels, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development people can emerge from this crisis stronger, with better jobs and a brighter, more equal and greener future for all.

The Agenda for Sustainable Development has different goals such as:

-Enhance all countries to cooperate for the access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism.



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- Promote the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed.
- Fully operationalize the technology bank and science, technology and innovation capacity building mechanism or least developed countries and enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology.

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