

## **Joint Statement of the EU Telecom Social Partners on Remote Work**

The European telecom social partners have developed guidelines on remote work based on best practice, which include recommendations on how to implement remote working arrangements for the benefit of employers and employees.

The guidelines define remote work as a form of work organisation that allows workers to perform their work during agreed working hours at a location agreed between the employer and the worker or chosen by the worker outside the normal workplace/office, including hybrid working arrangements.

We, the social partners of the telecommunications sector, emphasize the importance of maintaining social dialogue, collective bargaining and collective trade union rights in a remote work context. We also stress the importance of ensuring that remote workers have equal access to trade union information, and we commit to a good flow of communication between remote workers and trade unions.

In addition, the Guidelines emphasize the need to maintain equivalent employment rights and conditions for remote workers as for workers on the employer's premises and to ensure that remote work does not result in a change in employment status.

The document covers a range of issues related to remote work, including working conditions, data protection and privacy, equipment and resources, training and digital competence development, and equal opportunities.

The social partners have identified best practices that focus on occupational health and safety at work, work-life balance, and working hours for remote workers. In addition to relevant national legislation, collective agreements should include guidelines for ensuring the well-being of remote workers, including high-quality work arrangements, ergonomics, and violence-free workplaces. Employers, with the agreement of unions and worker representatives, must provide clear and detailed remote working information, conduct a health and safety assessment, and regularly monitor and update plans. Remote workers should have the opportunity to communicate with colleagues and participate in employer events to promote their mental wellbeing and engagement.

We recommend employers and employees ensure remote workers have the same access to resources and training opportunities as their colleagues in the office. This includes providing the equipment needed for remote work and offering training that specifically addresses remote work, cybersecurity, and other technical aspects/equipment needed for remote workers to perform adequately.

We also emphasize the importance of ensuring that remote work is gender neutral and open to all. To achieve this, the social partners recommend that the assessment of jobs that can be performed remotely should cover all areas of activity, and that surveys should be carried out among remote workers to measure the impact of this model of work organization has on employee' work-life balance. In addition, the document recommends that companies respect the representation of women and men in areas and departments where there is a quota to be filled by remote workers.

Overall, we believe that remote work should be considered an equally valuable form of work and that it respects diversity. We recommend that remote work be included in a broader debate about the evolution of workplace culture, social norms, and expectations.

The guidelines also suggest that employers, trade unions, and employee representatives should develop and agree on a list of minimum requirements/conditions for remote workers and conduct feasibility studies to ensure that remote workers have adequate infrastructure, services, and workspace to perform their tasks and stay in regular contact with each other.

In addition, we recognize that remote work and hybrid forms of work will evolve in line with technological innovation and emphasize the importance of effective social dialog to accompany the development of the new world of work.

As social partners, we commit to promoting this Joint Declaration and the Guidelines on Remote Work among relevant industry stakeholders and ask the European Commission to translate them into all EU languages to facilitate their dissemination, visibility and adoption at different levels.