



**STOP
THE
PANDEMIC**

Home-based TELEWORK

Virtual Focal Point meeting

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#EUhealthyworkplaces
#StopthePandemic

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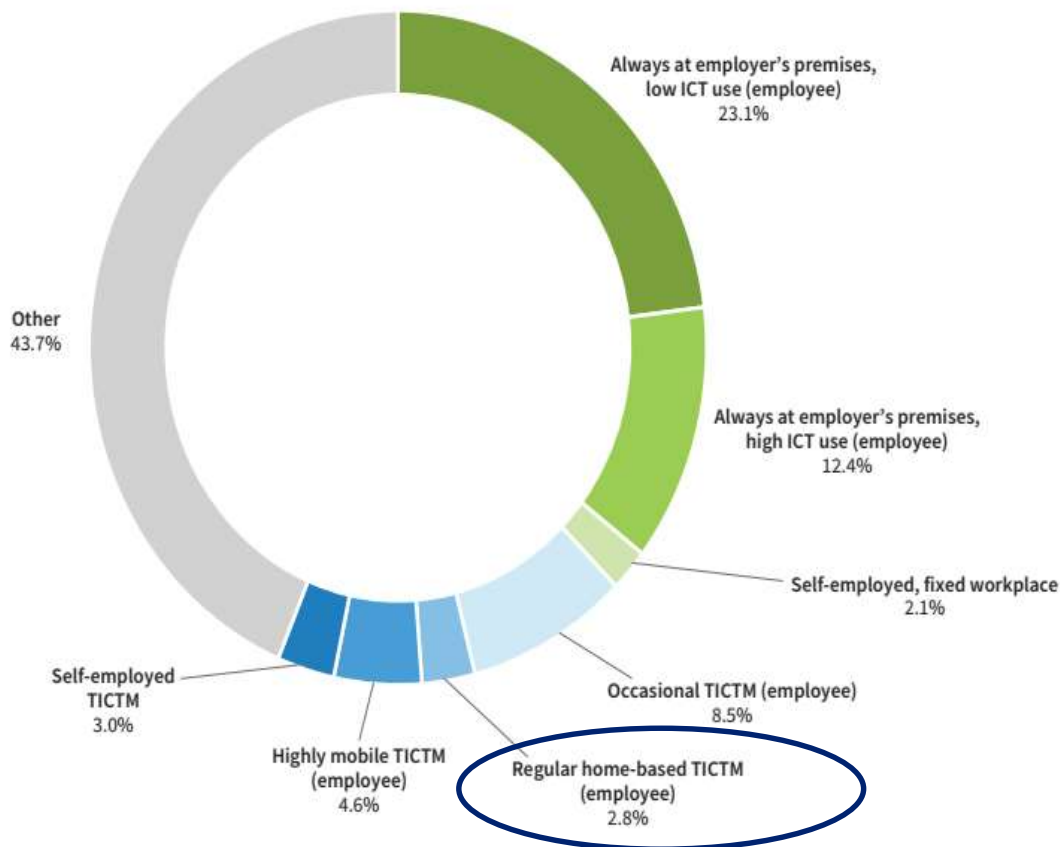


Content – Home-based teleworking

- **Telework before COVID-19**
- **Telework during COVID-19 (very first findings)**
- **Telework after COVID-19 / Legislation / Challenges**
- **Telework and OSH**
 - General risks
 - MSDs
 - Psychosocial risks
- **Current EU resources on home-based telework**
- **Resources to be developed / initiatives to be carried out**

Regular home-based telework in the EU

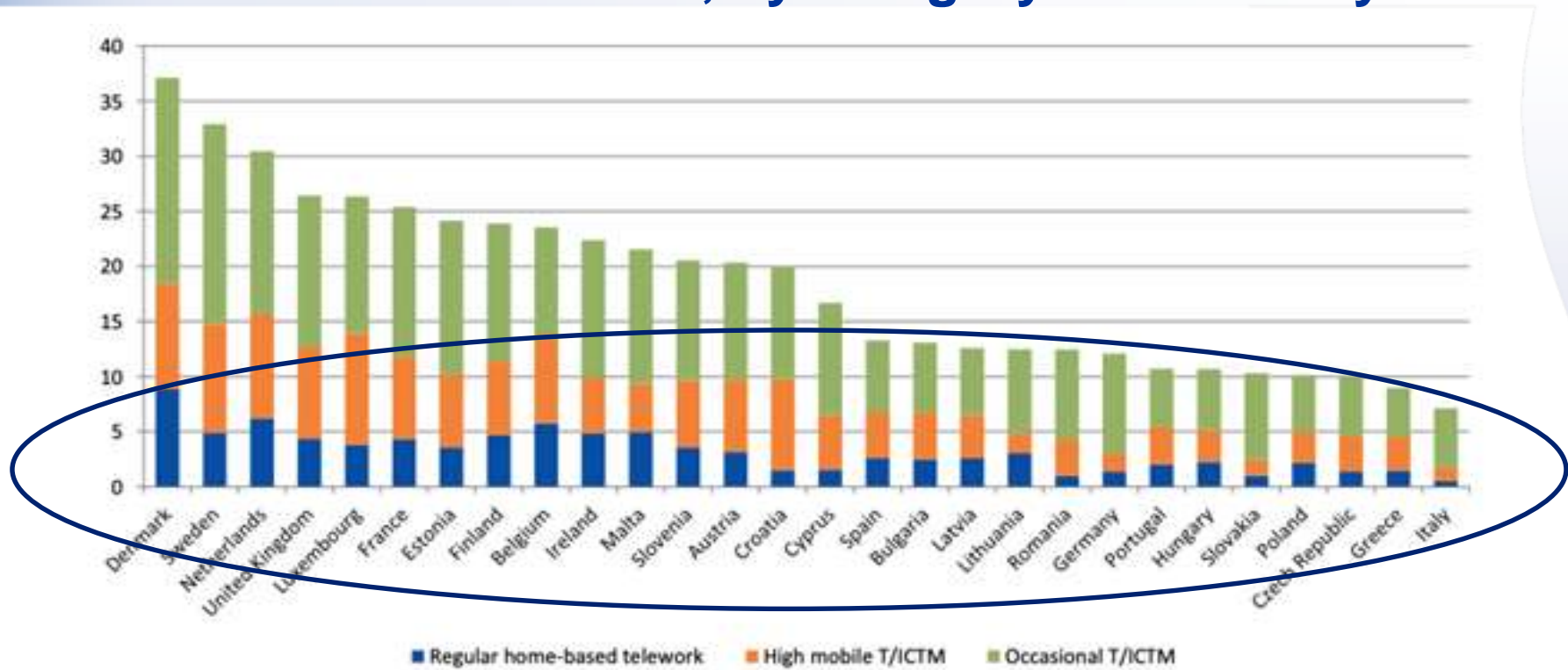
Figure 1: Shares of workers by type of work arrangement, EU28, 2015



“Telework can be defined as the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) — such as smartphones, tablets, laptops and desktop computers — for the purpose of working outside the employer’s premises”.

This PPT focuses on regular home-based telework^[1] (or working from home using ICT)

Percentage of employees doing Telework and ICT Based Mobile work in the EU28, by category and country



Source: EWCS 2015.

Prevalence of telework across EU Member States

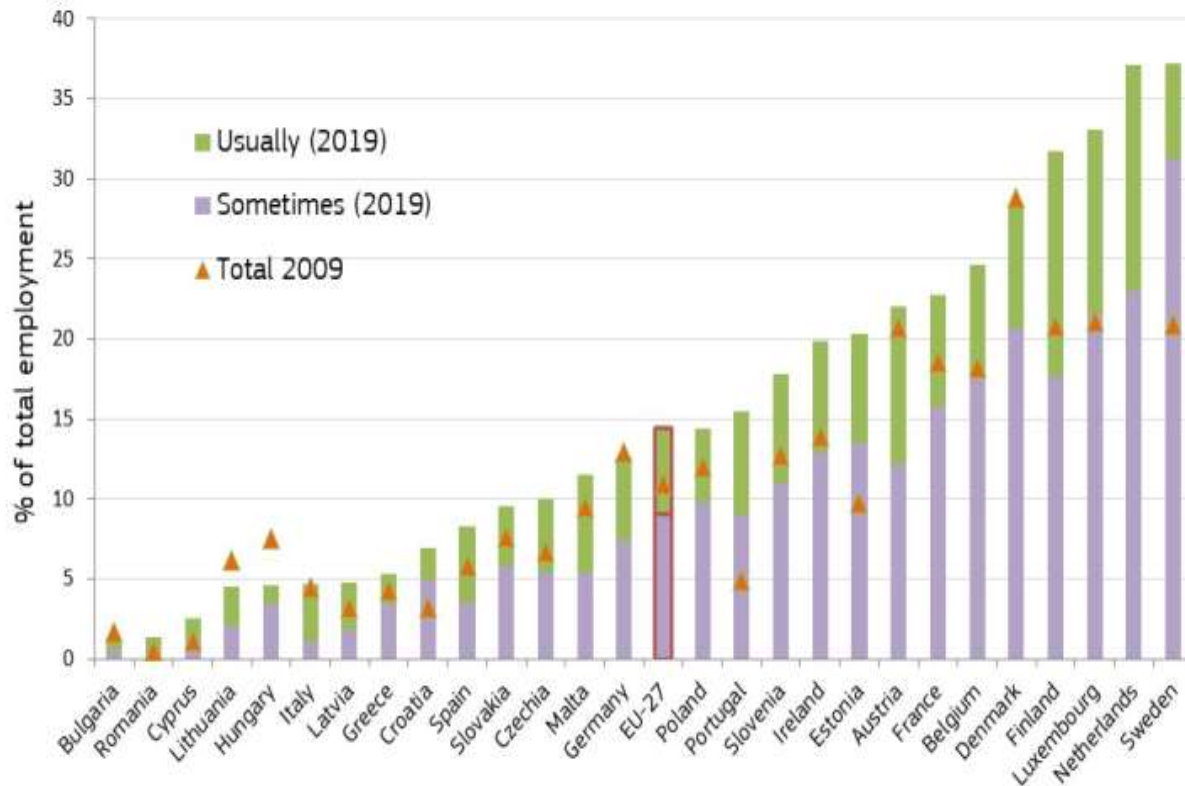


Figure 4. Prevalence of telework across EU Member States.

Source: Eurostat, LFS. Variable code: lfsa ehomp.

Prevalence of telework by sector, EU-27

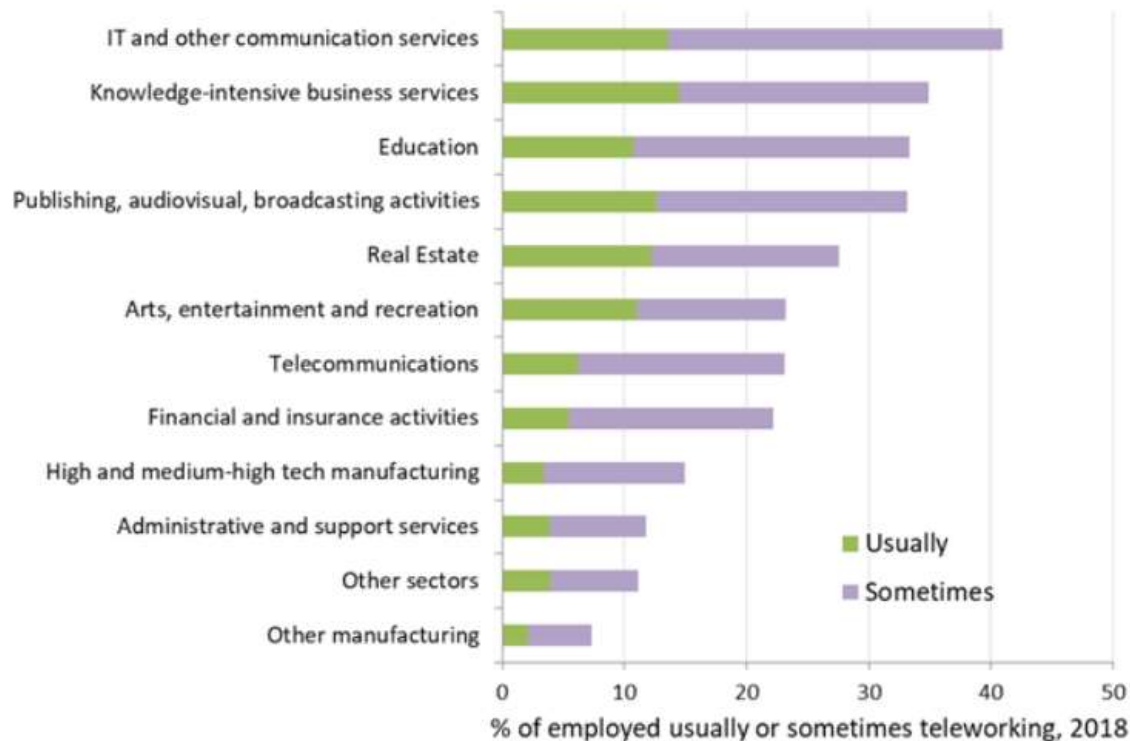


Figure 1: Prevalence of telework by sector, EU-27

Note: The group "Knowledge-intensive business services" includes the following sectors: Legal and Accounting Activities - Activities of Head Offices; Management Consultancy Activities - Architectural and Engineering Activities; Technical Testing and Analysis - Scientific Research and Development - Advertising and Market Research - Other Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities. The group IC and other communication services include: Computer Programming, Consultancy and Related Activities - Information Service Activities.

Source: JRC calculations from ad-hoc extractions of EU-LFS data provided by Eurostat

Living, working and COVID-19: First findings – April 2020

Eurofound – Teleworking

Figure 7: Proportion of workers who started teleworking as a result of COVID-19 by country (%)



Note: *Due to the lower response rate, the results for Cyprus, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands and Sweden have low reliability.

- Over a third (37%) of respondents to a recent Eurofound consultation began to telework as a result of the pandemic – over 30% in most MS
- The largest proportions of respondents who switched to working from home are to be found in Nordic and Benelux countries.
- Those who switched to working from home during the pandemic had previous telework experience (also reflected in country differences)
- Among those who have never worked from home prior to the pandemic, the proportion who began teleworking is lower – 24% – compared to people who have teleworked previously at least sometimes (56%).

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Institute for Employment Studies - Working at Home Wellbeing Survey - Interim Findings

- There has been a significant **increase in musculoskeletal complaints**. More than half of the survey respondents reported new aches and pains, especially in the neck (58 per cent), shoulder (56 per cent) and back (55 per cent), compared to their normal physical condition.
- **Diet and exercise are on the wane** with one fifth (20 per cent) of respondents admitting to an increase in alcohol consumption, while a third (33 per cent) are eating a less healthy diet, and over half (60 per cent) acknowledging that they are exercising less.
- **Poor sleep and increased risk of exhaustion** are also cause for concern. The majority of respondents reported a loss of sleep due to worry (64 per cent); and corresponding increased symptoms of fatigue (60 per cent), possibly as a consequence of nearly half (48 per cent) reporting working patterns that include long and irregular hours.
- The **mental health** of survey respondents depicts a workforce with a lot on its mind. Half of all respondents (50 per cent) reported **not being happy with their current work-life balance**; a third (33 per cent) **frequently feel isolated**, over a fifth (21 per cent) are worried about job security, while just under half (41 per cent) harbour health concerns for family members.

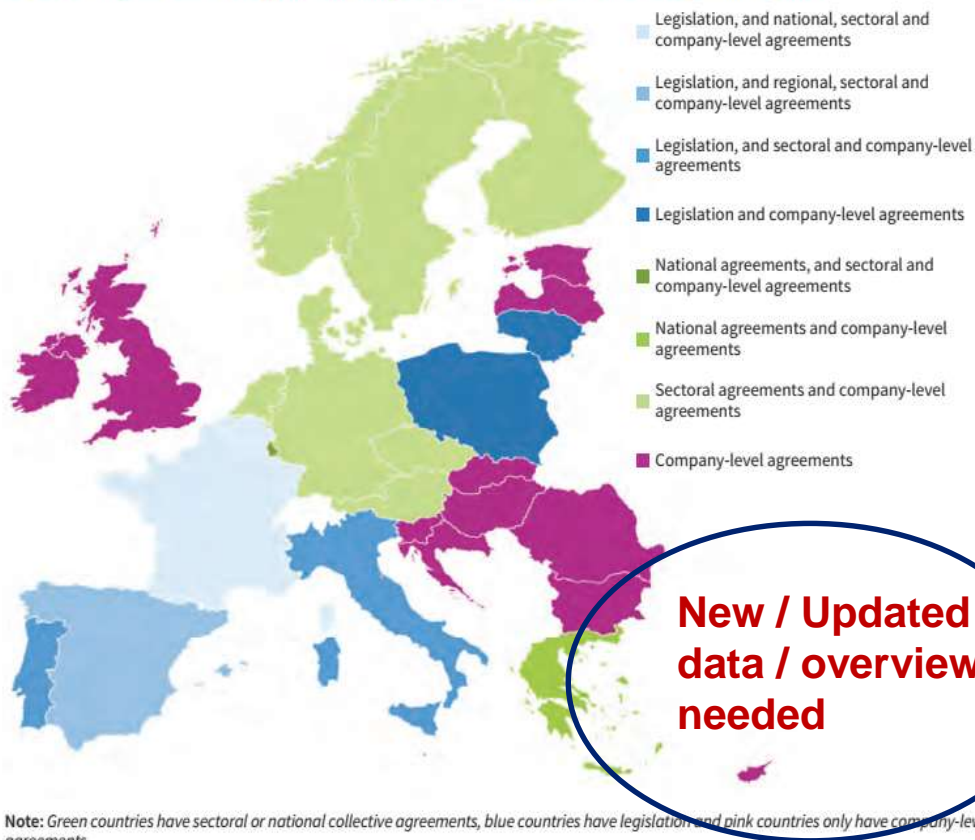
COVID-19: MSDs and home-based telework

- Prevalence of telework across the EU has risen and will continue to do so after COVID-19
- Telework increases the risk of suffering from MSDs
- Significant growth in MSD complaints among teleworkers during the pandemic
- Associated MSD and psychosocial risk factors need to be addressed
- The HWC20-22 will address MSDs and home-based telework.



Collective bargaining and legislation on Telework

Figure 30: Highest level of regulation linking TICTM and work-life balance, by Member State



Note: Green countries have sectoral or national collective agreements, blue countries have legislation and pink countries only have company-level agreements.

Source: Authors' own compilation, based on contributions from the Network of Eurofound Correspondents

■ In the context of (post) COVID-19

- In the “new normality” telework is expected to be more prevalent
- Ongoing / new debate(s) about:
 - need to (better) legislate on telework (e.g. ES, IT, ..)
 - develop workers’ digital skills
 - the right to disconnect
- What about telework and OSH?
 - Risk assessment
 - Work – life balance
 - MSDs
 - Equipment / means provided to teleworkers
 - ..

EU Directives – European framework agreement on telework

- **Employers have the same health and safety responsibilities for home-based teleworkers as for any other workers.**
 - Identifying and managing OSH risks of teleworkers (risk assessment).
- ***“..the employer is responsible for the protection of the occupational health and safety of the teleworker in accordance with **Directive 89/391** and relevant daughter directives, national legislation and collective agreements.” European framework agreement***
- **Directives most relevant to telework:**
 - The OSH Framework Directive;
 - Directive 2009/104/EC – use of work equipment
 - Directive 89/654/EEC - workplace requirements
 - Directive 90/270/EEC - display screen equipment
 - Directive 2003/88/EC - working time

Telework and OSH

- **General health and safety hazards need to be considered by both the employer and the worker (because employers have little direct control over the home workplace)**
- **The main risk assessment issues to be considered are (not exhaustive list):**
 - work environment (lighting, temperature, ...)
 - work equipment (computer (ICT tools in general), work station, ...)
 - mental wellbeing (private – work balance, isolation, stress, ...)
 - working alone (risk that an employee might suffer an accident)
 - fire

Work environment at home

An appropriate work environment at home may include:

- **A room (ideally), and if this is not possible at least a space where the teleworker can work. Important because:**
 - It allows the teleworker to be acoustically and visually isolated, facilitating concentration and minimising distractions.
 - It contributes to maintaining a boundary between work and domestic life (symbolic way of establishing a divide between these two spheres: getting out of the room means leaving work).
- **Adequate temperature, humidity and ventilation.**
- **Adequate lighting (including daylight) to perform tasks efficiently, in a healthy way.**
- **Adequate internet connection and telephone lines (if necessary).**
- **Regular checks for defects in equipment and electrical wiring.**

Display screen equipment (DSE) and workstation

Telework is also associated with ergonomic risks.

- Working with DSE, an inadequate workstation, sedentary work are related to: eye fatigue; MSDs; stress; mental and cognitive workload; and the health effects related to a lack of exercise/sedentarism (obesity, ...).
- The specific equipment, material and accessories, along with the preventive measures to be adopted, should be determined through the home workstation assessment. This will need to take into account user-specific needs, space restrictions and time spent working at the computer.
- Depending on the teleworking agreement, the time spent working from home at the computer could vary a lot, from occasional telework (e.g. 1 day every 2 weeks) to regular telework 1 day or a few days per week or even full time. The RA has to take into account this.

Tips and advice regarding DSE

- **Ergonomic work furniture (adjustable, adequate for different ICT tasks) that helps teleworkers to maintain a comfortable, neutral body posture with joints naturally aligned, and reduce stress and strain on the muscles, tendons and skeletal system**
- **Use of ergonomic IT equipment (e.g. adjustable screen holder, short keyboard) ensuring a more comfortable posture while working with a screen**
- **(ideally) Providing a mouse, keyboard, screen or docking station for those using a laptop regularly — for some of this equipment, this could mean allowing workers to take it home**
- **Adequate layout of the IT equipment components on the work surface in order to ensure a comfortable working position**

Tips and advice regarding DSE

- Ensuring sufficient space at the workstation, to allow the teleworker to have a comfortable position, change his/her position and move
- Ensuring adequate lighting, thermal comfort and a low noise level
- Training teleworkers on the correct techniques for adjusting work furniture and using a mouse and keyboard or other data input devices, and arranging the working area to ensure a comfortable, neutral work posture
- When carrying out computer work, ensuring periodical interruptions through breaks and other non-IT activities (to avoid eye fatigue and to break prolonged sitting) — short, frequent breaks are preferable
- Avoiding eye fatigue by focusing on distant objects or blinking from time to time

Simple steps to reduce sedentary work / prolonged sitting

Some examples of exercises that can be added to your work routine:

- **Stand up or walk during phone calls if you have a hands-free phone.**
- **Eat your lunch away from your desk.**
- **Walk during lunch breaks and during down times.**
- **Stretch at your desk every 30 minutes.**
- **Stand and take a break from your computer every 30 minutes.**
- **Add a minimum of 10 minutes of moderate or vigorous intensity aerobic exercise to your day, which is enough to get the heart pumping and burn calories.**

Stress and mental health issues

- **The main sources of stress for teleworkers include:**
 - long working hours;
 - intensive and flexible work;
 - work organisation;
 - isolation;
 - the blurring of boundaries between paid work and their private lives.
 - during the COVID-19 crisis conflicts between private and professional life (e.g. children care versus work tasks).

Tips to prevent the feeling of being isolated or disconnected

- **Provision of communication tools by the employer (emails, chats, shared documents, video conferencing, collaborative work tools, shared agenda, etc.) and their related support is desirable.**
- **Teleworkers use the communication tools that have been put in place by the employer to stay informed about the latest developments with work, the team.**
- **Teleworkers schedule regular meetings and catch up with the manager, team and clients to help maintain ongoing contact and foster positive working relationships.**
- **Informal contact is maintained by getting together online (virtual coffee breaks, discussion forums/chats, etc.).**
- **Teleworkers establish a routine for contact with the supervisor or co-workers.**

Available EU resources on telework (EU-OSHA, Eurofound, JRC)

- Practical tips to make home-based telework as healthy, safe and effective as possible, EU-OSHA / OSHwiki
- Telework, EU-OSHA / OSHwiki
- Teleworking Resources – MSDs database, EU-OSHA
- E-fact 33 – Risk assessment for Teleworkers, EU-OSHA (to be revised)
- Napo works at home to stop the pandemic
- New OiRA tool supports COVID-19 workplace risk assessment, EU-OSHA
- Telework in the EU before and after the COVID-19: where we were, where we head to, JRC
- Telework and ICT-based mobile work: Flexible working in the digital, Eurofound
- Working anytime, anywhere: The effects on the world of work, Eurofound

Teleworking - JRC, Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA

- Set of activities conducted by the COVID & Empl Working Group composed by researchers from the JRC, Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA (Maurizio Curtarelli)
- In the framework of this collaboration EU-OSHA plans to carry out a research
- Outcome: **Report** providing an overview of policies and fieldwork in a number of countries - building on research carried out by JRC - also to compare the situation during the COVID emergency and a few months later.
- This research will include a FoPs consultation to be launched in September 2020.

Planned Resources / initiatives

- Keep feeding the MSDs database with teleworking resources.
- Develop OSHwiki article(s) focusing on telework and MSDs (setting a work station at home, sedentarism)
- Update / revise: E-fact 33 - Risk assessment for Teleworkers
- Resources intended to the workplace (developed in the framework of the HWC20-22) (**under discussion**)
- Resources to be developed in the framework of the “Digitalisation OSH overview activity”
- Keep collaborating with the COVID & Empl Working Group (JRC, Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA)