TRADE UNIONS IN THE NEW WORLD OF REMOTE WORK:

THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF BARGAINING COLLECTIVELY IN FINANCE AND ICTS

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Remote work has transformed the way we organise and experience work. The increasing trend towards working remotely, certainly following the COVID-19 pandemic, has influenced issues such as working hours, workload and workers' mental health. This report looks at the risks and opportunities of remote work from a trade union and workers' perspective. In particular, it explores how remote work impacts on the ability of trade unions to organise workers, what implications it has for diversity, equity and inclusion, and what potential it can offer for better leadership. With this analysis, we want to provide concrete recommendations to empower trade unions to negotiate strong collective bargaining agreements on remote work.

2. ABOUT THIS REPORT AND THE RESEARCH PROJECT

This report is published as part of the UNI Europa Finance & UNI Europa ICTS EU-funded project: ARCO (101101519): *Addressing Remote work through Collective bargaining and Organising –engaging workers to identify solutions for social dialogue and capacity building in the new work reality.*

The overall objective of this project has been to identify how trade unions in Europe's finance and ICT & related services sectors can respond to this new form of work organisation, grow their representativeness and strengthen social dialogue and collective bargaining, to negotiate collective agreements at all levels.

OUTLINE

3. REMOTE WORK IN EUROPE
3.1 WHAT IS REMOTE WORK?

UNI Europa defines remote work as workers performing part or all of their work during their agreed working hours at a location (chosen by the worker) outside of the normal worksite/office and using primarily information and communication technologies provided by the employer. It should be a voluntary arrangement with workers able to combine it with office-based work in a pattern that works best for them.[1]

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1. UNI Key Principles: https://www.uni-europa.org/news/uni-releases-principles-for-collectively-bargaining-to-advance-remote-workers-rights/.
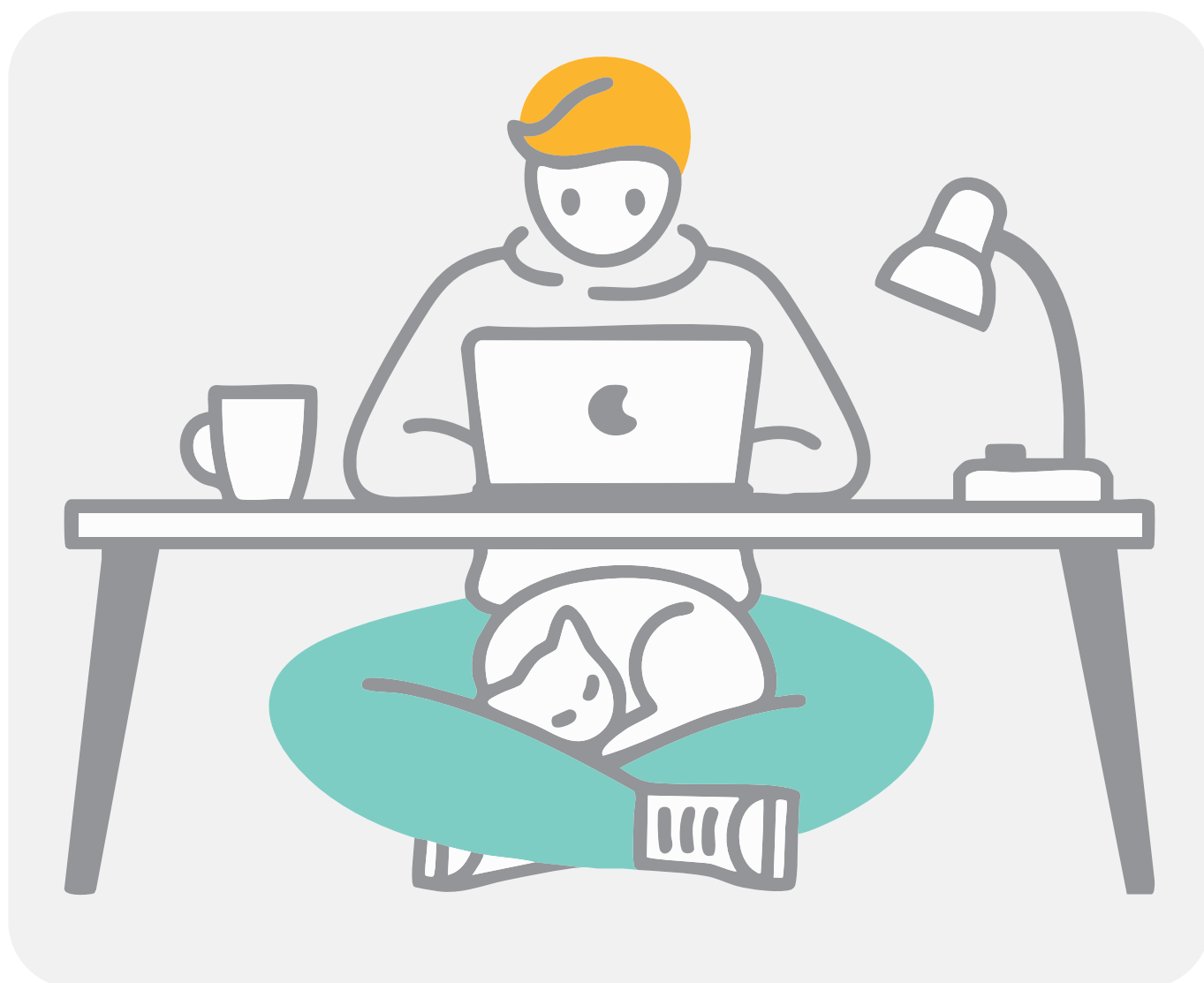
REMOTE WORK IS HERE TO STAY

FIGURE 1: INCREASING REMOTE WORK

- Estimate 2019 increase rate
- Estimate 2012-2019 increase rate average
- Actual evolution to 2023
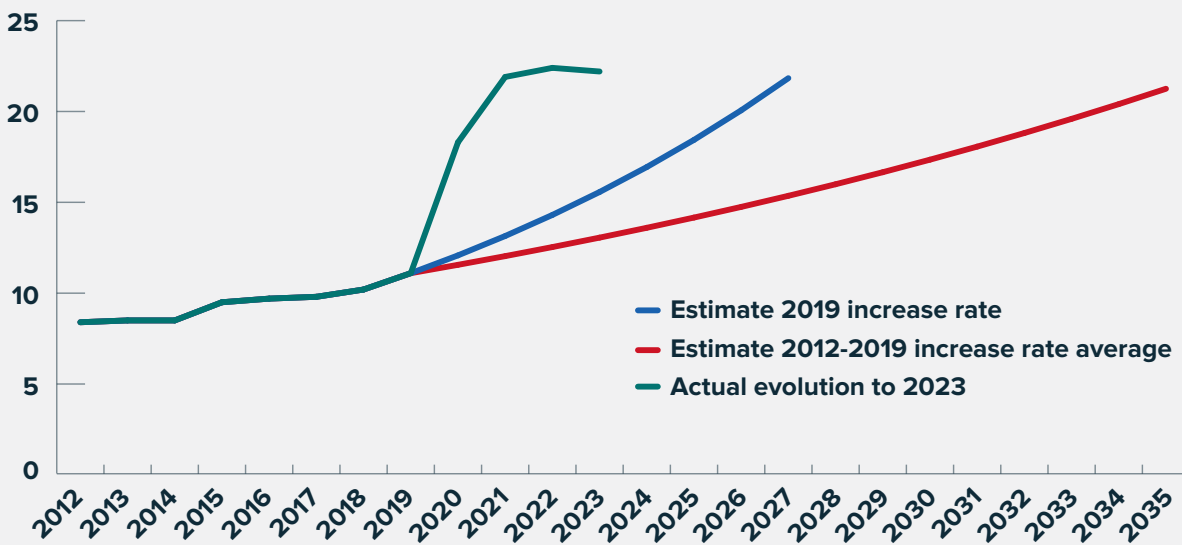
Source: Eurofound 2022, page 9, figure 2 with updates by Oscar Vargas Llave[2]

Since the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, remote work has transformed from a niche practice into a widespread phenomenon. This shift is particularly pronounced in the Information and Communication Technologies & Services (ICTS) and finance sectors, where the digital nature of work, and the increasing use of digital tools has facilitated this transition. The pandemic-related lockdowns boosted remote work across Europe (see figure 1) and, post-COVID-19, the trend is here to stay. These new workplace dynamics should bring added value to workers' lives. Trade unions need to be 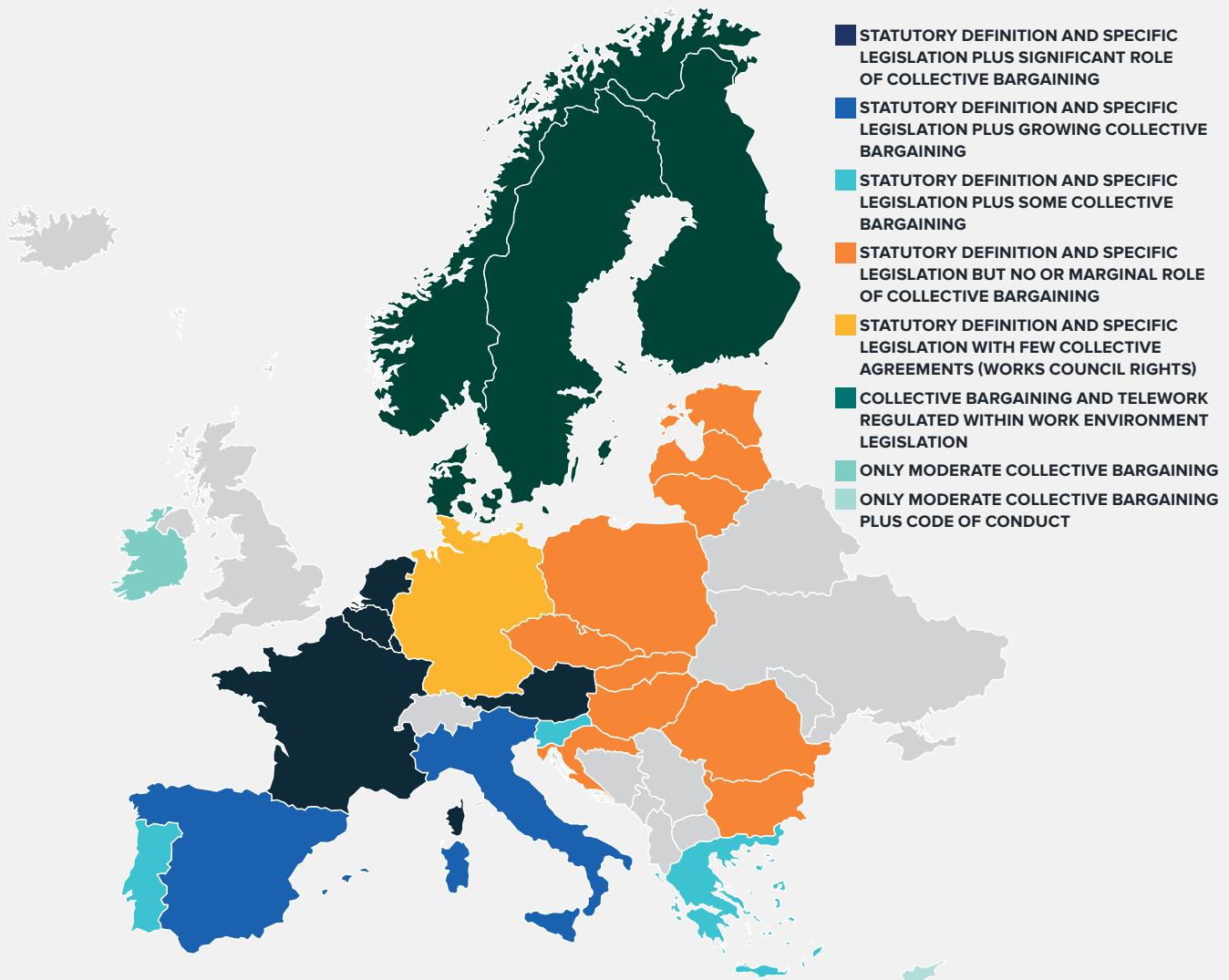at the centre of developments and decision-making, working with employers through social dialogue and collective bargaining, to shape this transformation of work, address the risks and opportunities, and ensure remote work enhances rather than threatens labour rights and working conditions.

UNI Europa Finance and UNI Europa ICTS have led the way on this, collaborating with the European level sector employers to negotiate Joint Social Partner Recommendations on Remote Work (see more in the infobox 2 on p. 12). These commitments to protect workers and give them the flexibility to work remotely without negative consequences are an important step in ensuring the right to work remotely under the best conditions. They also set a baseline to negotiate strong collective bargaining agreements for finance and ICTS workers at national, sectoral and company levels across all of Europe.

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2. Eurofound (2022a), The rise in telework: Impact on working conditions and regulations, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, page 9, figure 2 with updated data from Eurostat Labour Force Survey 2022 and 2023 by Oscar Vargas Llave, https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/system/files/2023-01/ef22005en.pdf. Note: referred to in subsequent footnotes as Eurofound (2022a).

FIGURE 2: REGULATION OF REMOTE WORK IN EU COUNTRIES AND NORWAY:

Legend:
- STATUTORY DEFINITION AND SPECIFIC LEGISLATION PLUS SIGNIFICANT ROLE OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING
- STATUTORY DEFINITION AND SPECIFIC LEGISLATION PLUS GROWING COLLECTIVE BARGAINING
- STATUTORY DEFINITION AND SPECIFIC LEGISLATION PLUS SOME COLLECTIVE BARGAINING
- STATUTORY DEFINITION AND SPECIFIC LEGISLATION BUT NO OR MARGINAL ROLE OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING
- STATUTORY DEFINITION AND SPECIFIC LEGISLATION WITH FEW COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS (WORKS COUNCIL RIGHTS)
- COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND TELEWORK REGULATED WITHIN WORK ENVIRONMENT LEGISLATION
- ONLY MODERATE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING
- ONLY MODERATE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING PLUS CODE OF CONDUCT

Source: Eurofound 2022b, figure 1, page 7[7].

The Twing project[3] is one of the most comprehensive quantitative studies for remote work, social dialogue and collective bargaining in Europe on cross-country and cross-sectoral levels including the ICT and finance sectors. Its findings reveal that prior to COVID-19, there were generally considerable cross-country variances to remote work. Countries with a low starting point, however, caught up fast during the pandemic. We can describe remote work as an upward divergence across European countries. The ICT sector is different though. It is the only sector where an increase in remote work took place in all European countries in a very similar way[4]. The finance and insurance sector is the sec-

ond most important sector across Europe concerning remote work after the ICT sector[5].

In the EU, the percentage of employees sporadically working remotely increased from 14% in 2019 to 24% in 2021, then registered a small decline to 22% in 2022, and remained stable in 2023. During this year, more than 44 million workers in the EU worked remotely usually or sometimes. In absolute terms, the number of workers working remotely in 2023 is almost double that of 2019.[6] While general access to remote work differs from country to country, **most European countries have established rules and regulations concerning remote work** (see figure 2).

The characteristics of employees who work remotely also differ across Europe. Overall, in 2021, there were more women working remotely than men (see figure 3). In the ICT and finance sectors, however, there are more men working remotely than women[8]. Eurofound as well as the Eu-

rofound and the EU Twing project draw on the data of the Eurostat Labour Force Survey and provide a comparison of characteristics of remote workers that include gender, age, job category, sector, family situation, and educational background. For more details please refer to the respective studies.[9]

FIGURE 3: EMPLOYEES WORKING FROM HOME BY GENDER AND COUNTRY, 2021, EU27 (%)
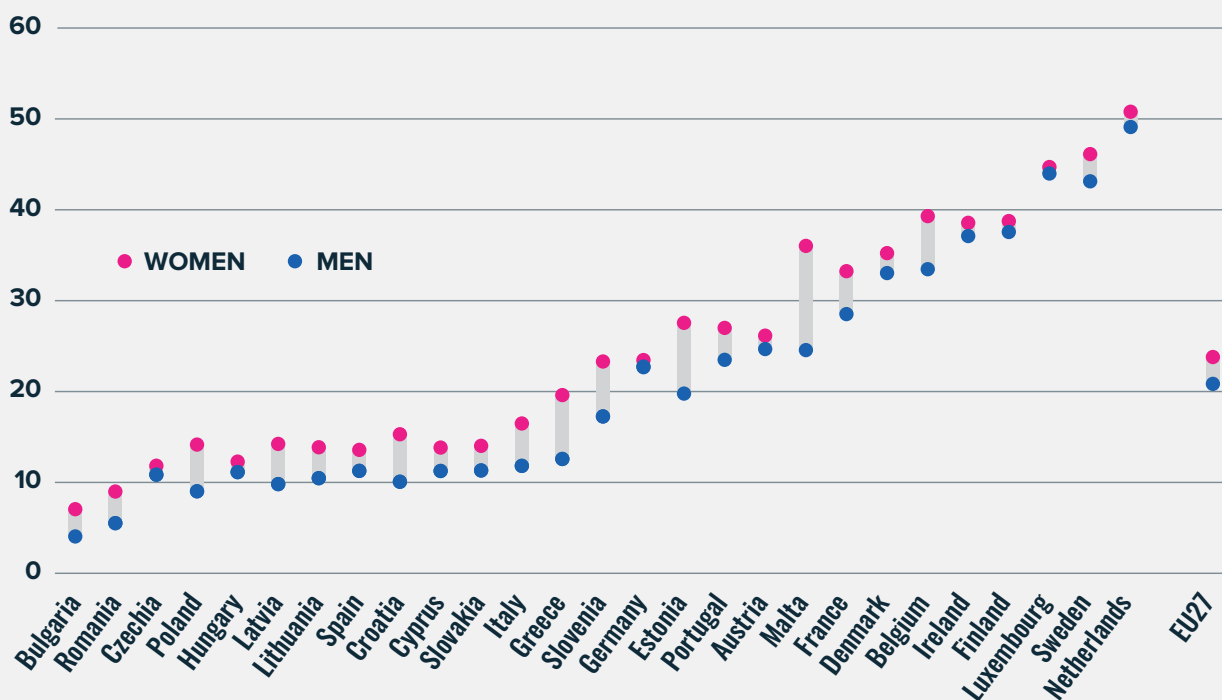
Source: Eurofound 2022, page 10, figure 5.[10]

3. Twing project, https://twingproject.eu/
4. Twing project (2023) Quantitative Analysis Report. Exploring the contribution of social dialogue and collective bargaining in the promotion of decent and productive telework in the post-COVID-19 scenario (GA 101052332), Praxis Center for Policy Studies, Kirsti Melesk, funded by the DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission, https://twingproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/TWING-Quant-analysis.-Final-report.pdf, page 3. Note: referred to in subsequent footnotes as Twing project (2023).
5. Twing project (2023), page 5.
6. Eurofound (2022a), page 9, figure 2 with updated data from Eurostat Labour Force Survey 2022 and 2023 by Oscar Vargas Llave.
7. Eurofound (2022b), Telework in the EU: Regulatory frameworks and recent updates, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, figure 1 page 7, https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/system/files/2022-09/ef22032en.pdf.
8. Twing project (2023). See results in annex.
9. Eurofound (2022a), and Twing project (2023),
10. Eurofound (2022a), page 10, figure 5.

3.2 QUO VADIS REMOTE WORK?
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

We can put remote work into a larger context by looking at an economic macro perspective – the role of remote work for employment in Europe, and an economic meso perspective – how remote work forms part of a larger phenomenon of (digital) transformation and the need for new organisational learning cultures.

Europe's finance and ICTS sectors have been especially impacted by the digital transformation and disruption caused by AI. These developments push companies at a pressurised rate to transform their business models, company strategy, organisational structure and leadership approach, which impacts negatively on employees. For example, the impact can be in relation to future job profiles and the type of competences leaders and workers need to have to proactively shape this transformation. This also profoundly affects the way teams work and leaders lead (see chapter 8 on leadership). Besides changes in work tasks, work organisation and work flows, jobs also disappear and new jobs emerge, such as chief digital officer and AI manager.

With the introduction of AI tools and digital solutions to support the daily work of workers in the ICTS and finance sectors, tasks and workflows will change intensely. Trade unions need to accompany this process and make sure that workers can use the time freed up by the usage of AI tools for on-the-job training, lifelong learning, team activities to support (remote) collaboration and team exchange – as well as a better work-life balance.

Remote work, AI and digitalisation can lead to isolation of workers and a lack of cohesion between team members. This "glue" is necessary for individuals to identify with their work, their organisation and their colleagues, prevent burnout, help the team work well together and perform well. Cohesion contains a mixture of trust, psychological safety, knowing each other well, and understanding how you and your colleagues work well together and what you can each bring to the team. Besides the active support to have

cohesion in a team, individuals and teams need a culture of continuous learning to keep up with the ever-faster development of AI tools and other new innovations that disrupt the way we currently work.

Trade unions and employers together need to address this transformation, shape policies and processes to accompany and support workers, offer training, and support self-learning phases during working hours to constantly strengthen future skills to navigate the transformation.

Organisations supporting modern forms of leadership and a healthy work culture can reduce the negative effects of remote work. There is a direct relationship between leadership quality and turnover in organisations. For more details see chapter 8.

Keeping in mind this larger context of transformation of the ICTS and finance sectors, in the following two subsections we identify the challenges and opportunities of remote work.

For some, remote work offers increased flexibility at work, improved work-life balance, saved time because of the lack of a commute, as well as other benefits. The mass uptake of remote work during COVID-19 has reduced some of the stigma associated with this type of working arrangement and the related negative impact on future work prospects and career developments.

Remote work can also come with risks, however. These include increased isolation and mental health issues, lower levels of innovation and creativity, intensified workloads, longer working hours and digital connection, and a blurring of professional and private life. There can also be health and safety issues, the need for appropriate compensation, strains on the employment relationship, worker surveillance, access to training and career development, and notably, greater hurdles for trade unions to overcome as they organise, negotiate collective agreements, and communicate in an increasingly virtual and digital format.

3.2.1 THE CHALLENGES OF WORKING REMOTELY

Through publications from Eurofound, ETUI and the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, research results like the EU-funded Twing project and interviews carried out for the ARCO project with UNI Europa Finance and ICTS members, and other remote work experts, **several core challenges related to remote work repeatedly emerge**[11]:

1. The right to work remotely (but not the obligation to meet that right by the employer)
2. The right to disconnect
3. Psychosocial risks, including isolation
4. Access to training and re/upskilling opportunities
5. Trade union organising, digital access rights and staying in touch with union members working remotely
6. Diversity, equity, inclusion and non-discrimination
7. New leadership models

(1) Remote work should be voluntarily and reversible. There should not be any obligation to work remotely, and no one wishing to do so should be disenfranchised unless the employer can make a justifiable case. There is anecdotal evidence that some employers use remote work as a carrot or as a stick for specific workers, or use their right to adapt work organisation to call workers into the office ad hoc, making it difficult for them to organise their professional and private lives.

(2) All workers, including those working remotely, are entitled to rest periods, limits to maximum hours of work, and the right to disconnect. Yet even when there is a legal **right to disconnect** (national legislation, sectoral or company-level collective agreements), **Eurofound nonetheless finds a lack of implementation**[12]. **Many workers are contacted and feel obliged to respond to work-related communications outside of their working time**, often without overtime compensation, which leads to increased health issues, such as stress and burnout[13] (see also section 6).

(3) Remote work can lead to isolation and a lack of trust and cohesion between team members. Furthermore, the isolation of individuals at work can lead to a general increase of isolation and individualisation in societies. Trade unions as spaces of community and solidarity are key in ensuring the contact to remote workers and need to be aware of this development.

A potential lack of trust can lead to excessive controls which invade privacy (including data rights) and affect working relations. Practices such as the use of surveillance tools to monitor remote employees (video surveillance, sound recording, biometric controls, remote monitoring, indexing of internet browsing, checking of email and/or computer use), storage of employee data and usage thereof in disciplinary proceedings, should be restricted, unless they are firmly regulated through national legislation and/or a trade union collective agreement. Data collection or surveillance of the workforce should be for a clear objectively justifiable purpose only.

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11. See list of publications and list of interviews conducted in the annexe.
12. Right to disconnect: Implementation and impact at company level, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, https://eurofound.link/ef23002. Note: referred to in subsequent footnotes as Eurofound (2023).
13. Eurofound (2023)

Employees and trade unions should be granted the right to information, consultation and transparency prior to the roll-out of such tools and should participate in their implementation and use.

Employers should provide the opportunity for regular direct contact and formal and informal socialising with co-workers. They should also put in place policies to prevent, monitor and resolve work-related cyberbullying.

(4) Remote workers must be given the same **access to training and re/upskilling opportunities** as their office-based colleagues. Employers must ensure that remote workers are 'visible' within the company and provide them with opportunities for regular face-to-face meetings for career development and mentorship. This is particularly important for female remote workers who continue to bear the greater load of home and family responsibilities and have less time and opportunity to engage in career enhancing activities outside of their work schedules.

(5) Remote work should not be used to diminish or obstruct **workers' rights to form or join a trade union**, nor should it be used to weaken social dialogue and collective bargaining or impinge upon trade union rights, activities and organising – including digital access to the workforce and secure digital meeting spaces.

For more on organising in a remote work context, see section 5.

(6) The option to work remotely must be available **without discrimination** and be considered as an equally valuable form of work. The potential increased in isolation of prolonged remote work can also impinge on the creation and building of workplace networks and breaking the glass ceiling, which could particularly impact the career development of women and minority groups.

For more on diversity, equity, inclusion and non-discrimination in a remote work context, see section 6.

(7) The duty to respect the rights and working conditions of remote workers requires a **collective approach** with commitments from senior management. Specific training should also be introduced to help supervisors manage teams remotely. Modern leadership approaches instead of traditional leadership approaches can support remote workers and increase workers' engagement and well-being. This needs to be coupled with a culture of lifelong learning and collaboration, and changes in the workplace's organisational design.

For more on modern leadership in remote work, see section 7.

These are not the only challenges related to remote work that workers and trade unions across Europe face. For a comprehensive overview, see the ETUI publication titled "The future of remote work" and specifically UNI Europa's chapter contribution: "Remote work: ensuring trade union and workers' rights through collective bargaining"[14].

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14. ETUI (2023): the future of remote work https://www.etui.org/publications/future-remote-work.

3.2.1 REMOTE WORK OPPORTUNITIES

Remote work is still very popular among workers across Europe, who show a preference for working, at least partially, from home[15]. The share of remote workers is highest in the ICT and finance sectors[16]. Whereas in all age groups remote work is popular, it is especially high among workers aged 33-44[17]. Remote work can also attract talent. For example, in a survey among Swedish engineers, more than half would avoid working for an employer who does not allow remote work (see infobox 1 below).

INFOBOX 1

Engineers of Sweden / Sveriges Ingenjörer – Survey 2021[18]:

- More than half of engineers avoid working for employers who do not allow remote work.
- When asked how they value the possibility of working remotely and how important it is when choosing an employer, **nine out of ten members say that it is important to be able to work remotely**.
- **The survey shows that if their current employer did not allow remote work at all, almost half of the engineers would choose to leave their employer**. More than one in two engineers also state that they would not apply for a job with an employer that does not allow remote work.

Studies have shown that remote work can have various opportunities too[19]:
– Less commuting, which leads to savings in time and costs
– The potential to improve work-life balance by facilitating family life helping workers cope with the demands of their personal lives and care duties
– Increased leisure time
– Increased autonomy and flexibility in organising working time to suit preferences and needs
– Can support reintegration into work after a long absence
– Can remove physical and mental access barriers and allow for greater flexibility in working hours for disabled people (that said, we need to overcome isolation and improve connectedness)

Remote work can also foster training for digital skills, hybrid teamwork, and leadership training. Since remote work often forms part of companies' digitalisation strategy, alongside the implementation of AI tools, this workplace transformation can boost issues of training (which employers must provide during working hours), lifelong learning and modern leadership. For example, in the finance sector in Malta, the General Workers Union (GWU) puts a clause in every collective agreement under the remote work section on training workers and adequate digital tools.

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15. Eurofound (2022c), Fifth round of the Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey: Living in a new era of uncertainty, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, https//:www.eurofound.europa.eu/system/files/2022-07/ef22042en.pdf, page 3, figure 3. Note: referred to in subsequent footnotes as Eurofound (2022c).
16. Twing project (2023), page 5.
17. Eurofound (2022c), page 3, figure 3. See also for example the survey of office workers in Sweden, Study by Jonas Grafström: Who wants to work from home? A demographic survey of attitudes towards telework, 2023. https://cms.ratio.se/app/uploads/2023/11/rap-27-vem-vill-jobba-hemifran.pdf or the cross-sectoral survey in France by the Observatoire du Télétravail in 2023.
18. Engineers of Sweden (2021) Remote work – a decisive criterion when the engineer chooses an employer. Publication in Swedish: Distansarbete – avgörande kriterium när ingenjören väljer arbetsgivare.
19. Eurofound (2022b) and Employers for Change and The Open Doors Initiative (2021): The Future of Work and Disability - A Remote Opportunity by Joan O'Donnell, https://tinyurl.com/disability-studynitiative.

4. REMOTE WORK AGREEMENTS
4.1 A REGULATORY PATCHWORK

A regulatory framework for remote work is important. Currently there is a regulatory patchwork at the EU level. Negotiations to update the 2002 European Social Partners Framework Agreement on Telework as a legally binding EU Directive broke down at the end of 2023 due to the employers' unwillingness to negotiate in good faith. There are, however, at least five EU Directives related to remote work, such as the Framework Directive on Occupational Safety and Health (1989/391/EEC) and the Working Time Directive (2003/88/EC) (for a full list see the info box below).

Under our UNI Europa slogan 'Forward Through Collective Bargaining', we are guided by the belief that collective bargaining is at the very core of democratic societies and social progress. Collective bargaining is about the ability of workers to shape their own working lives collectively and have a real say in their workplaces, and is a precondition for allowing workers and their families to live in dignity. Only through genuine and constructive social dialogue and collective bargaining can we ensure that workers' rights, jobs, health and safety are guaranteed.

While legally non-binding, the European social partners in finance and ICTS have paved the way by negotiating their own Joint Declarations on Remote Work, to be taken up by our members in collective agreements across the sectors and throughout Europe.

INFOBOX 2

EU-level agreements and legislation

- European Social Partners' Framework Agreement on Telework 2002
- Framework Agreement on cross-border telework (and social security) 2023
- Joint Declaration on Remote Work and New Technologies by the European Social Partners in the Banking Sector 2021
- European Parliament resolution for an initiative on EU legislation on Fair Telework and the Right to Disconnect (January 2021) and Council Conclusions on Telework (2021)
- UNI Europa ICTS & related services, ETNO (2023) The **EU Telecom** Social Partners' **Guidelines on Remote Work**, 20221012_draft joint declaration RW v01 (002) - IH221018 (uni-europa.org)
- UNI Europa ICTS & related services, ETNO (2023) **joint statement** of the **EU Telecom** Social Partners on Remote Work, https://www.uni-europa.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2023/06/Telecom-Remote-Work-Joint-Statement.pdf
- Related legislation: Framework Directive on Occupational Safety and Health (1989/391/EEC), Working Time Directive (2003/88/EC), Directive on Work-life balance for Parents and Carers (2019/1158 EU), Directive on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions (2019/1152 EU)

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20. UNI Europa: press release (2023), https://www.uni-europa.org/news/uni-europa-backs-etuc-call-for-legislation-on-telework/.

Strong finance and ICTS collective agreements on remote work have already been negotiated, at both the sectoral level (bank sector agreements in Greece, Italy, Romania, Spain, inter alia) and the company level (Capgemini France, eir Ireland, Telefónica Spain, Deutsche Bank Spain, Allianz Spain, AXA Spain), covering many key aspects (trade union rights and freedoms, including digital access to the remote workforce, the right to disconnect, access to skills development and career opportunities, protections against workplace discrimination, harassment and cyberbullying). For a more comprehensive overview, please refer to the UNI Europa chapter,

"Remote work: ensuring trade union and workers' rights through collective bargaining" in the ETUI publication on remote work[21].

Most European countries also have national/sectoral regulation on remote work in place (see section 3.1, figure 2). In 2022, UNI Global Union compiled a database of 118 sectoral and company collective agreements on remote work dating from 2012-2022, from 25 countries around the world and mainly covering the finance and ICTS sectors. From the 118 agreements, the vast majority were negotiated in Europe (see figures 4 and 5 below).
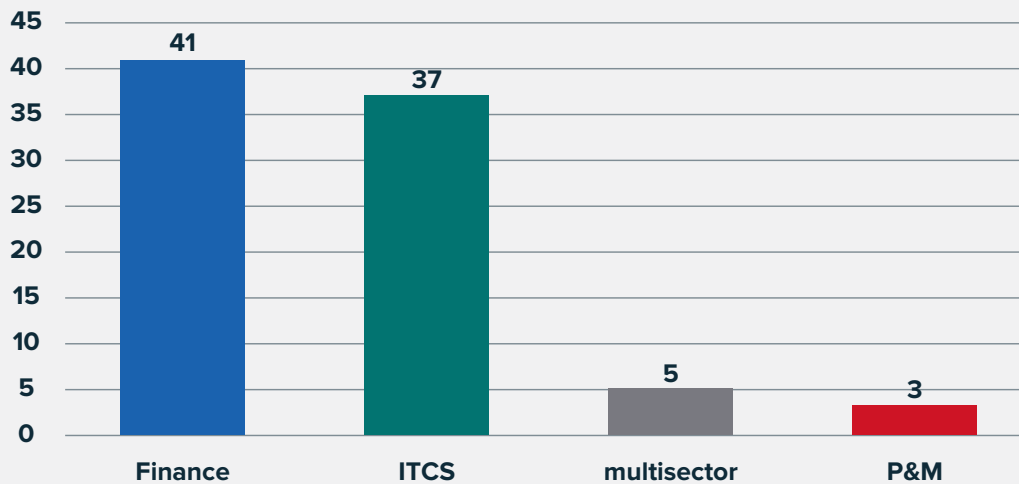
FIGURE 4: UNI GLOBAL UNION REMOTE WORK DATABASE:
NUMBER OF AGREEMENTS IN EUROPE IN COMPARISON TO REST OF WORLD UNTIL JANUARY 2022
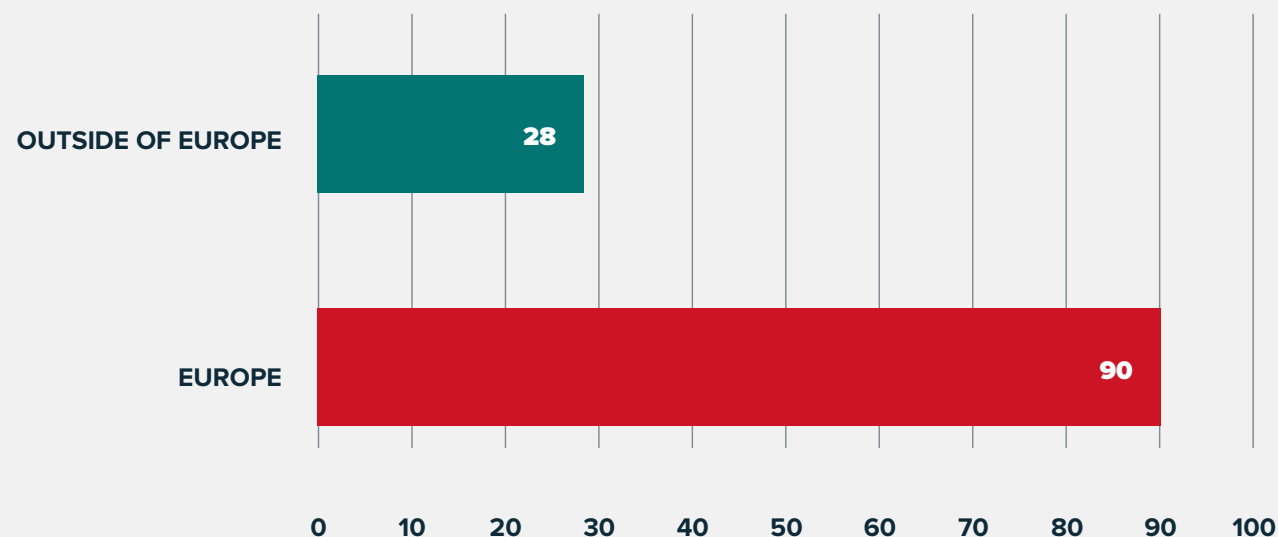
Source: UNI Global Union Remote Work Database

21. ETUI (2023): The future of remote work https://www.etui.org/publications/future-remote-work.

**FIGURE 5: UNI GLOBAL UNION REMOTE WORK DATABASE:
NUMBER OF AGREEMENTS PER SECTOR UNTIL JANUARY 2022**

Sector	Number
Finance	41
ITCS	37
multisector	5
P&M	3

Source: UNI Global Union Remote Work Database

The report accompanying[22] the database identified some of the key issues included in these collective agreements:

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

THE RIGHT TO DISCONNECT

HEALTH AND SAFETY

SURVEILLANCE

CIVIL LIABILITY INSURANCE

COMPENSATION

WORKERS' ACCIDENT INSURANCE

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

ONLINE HARASSMENT

While over half of the agreements ensure freedom of association, and also include explicit mention of an employee's right to disconnect, less prominence is given to other important issues such as career development, protections against domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence and harassment, psycho-social risks, gender, diversity, equity and inclusion. Considering the rise of inequalities post-COVID-19, these issues need to be included in every remote work collective agreement. Sections on AI and surveillance also need to be updated. Most agreements lack the inclusion of feedback reviews in the middle or towards the end of the validity of the agreement to learn what works well and what needs to be changed.

22. UNI Global Union (2022) Remote work: A review of unions' collective bargaining response,
https://uniglobalunion.org/report/remote-work-a-review-of-unions-collective-bargaining-response/

4.2 CHECKLIST: WHAT TO INCLUDE WHEN NEGOTIATING A COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT ON REMOTE WORK

☑ **DEFINITION OF REMOTE WORK**

☑ **VOLUNTARY AND REVERSIBLE**

☑ **WORKING CONDITIONS**

☑ **TRADE UNION RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS (INCLUDING ACCESS RIGHTS)**

☑ **THE RIGHT TO COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATION**

☑ **IMPLEMENTATION CONDITIONS (WORKING DAY AND HOURS, OBJECTIVES, TRAINING, MEANS AND FACILITIES, RISK PREVENTION, DATA PROTECTION)**

☑ **EQUIPMENT AND COST COMPENSATION**

☑ **ERGONOMICS**

☑ **THE RIGHT TO DISCONNECT**

☑ **PROTECTION AGAINST PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS (INCLUDING ISOLATION)**

☑ **STRICT LIMITS TO SURVEILLANCE**

☑ **REGULATION OF USE OF AI TOOLS IN (REMOTE) WORK AND PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION (ALSO AI TOOLS)**

☑ **USE OF DIGITAL TOOLS, SECURITY MEASURES, DATA PROTECTION**

☑ **PROTECTIONS AGAINST WORKPLACE VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT (CYBERBULLYING, THIRD-PARTY VIOLENCE, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT)**

☑ **EQUAL PAY AND EQUAL ACCESS TO TRAINING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

☑ **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND NON--DISCRIMINATION IN REMOTE WORK (E.G. CREATION OF JOINT EQUITY/INCLUSION COMMITTEES, FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS, EMPLOYER-PROVIDED ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY, ETC.)**

☑ **PURSUE RISK PREVENTION: CARRY OUT A RISKS ASSESSMENT FOR REMOTE WORK AT INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM LEVEL: LEADER AND WORKER, WITH THEIR TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVE, ANALYSE THE RISKS AND DEFINE ACTIONS IN ALL AREAS MENTIONED IN THE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT**

☑ **COMMIT TO LIFELONG LEARNING, UPSKILLING, AND TRAINING DURING WORKING HOURS ON HOW TO WORK EFFECTIVELY FROM HOME, INCLUDING DIGITAL UPSKILLING, ERGONOMICS, REMOTE COMMUNICATION, WORK ORGANISATION, REMOTE COLLABORATION AND MENTAL HEALTH**

☑ **TRAINING FOR LEADERS: MAKE A NEEDS ASSESSMENT, AND OFFER TRAINING DURING WORKING HOURS ON HOW TO LEAD EFFECTIVELY IN REMOTE SETTINGS, EFFECTIVE REMOTE COMMU-NICATION, WORK ORGANISATION, MENTAL HEALTH, PSYCHOLOGICAL RISK, ERGONOMICS, LEADERSHIP STYLES AND THEIR IMPACT ON WORKER ENGAGE-MENT, DIGITAL UPSKILLING, AND REMOTE PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

☑ **REGULAR EVALUATION, FOLLOW-UP AND MONITORING OF THE COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT**

UNI Global Key Trade Union Principles for Ensuring Workers' Rights When Working Remotely

THE FULL SET OF PRINCIPLES

EMPLOYERS MUST GUARANTEE FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING FOR REMOTE WORKERS.

EMPLOYERS SHOULD REMAIN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF WORKERS.

REMOTE WORK SHOULD NOT UNDERMINE EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS AND THE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP WITH WORKERS.

WORK EQUIPMENT AND REMOTE WORKSPACE COSTS SHOULD BE THE EMPLOYER'S RESPONSIBILITY.

SURVEILLANCE TOOLS TO MONITOR REMOTE WORKERS SHOULD BE RESTRICTED.

REMOTE WORK SHOULD BE 'GENDER-NEUTRAL' AND OPEN TO ALL.

REMOTE WORK SHOULD BE VOLUNTARY.

REMOTE WORKERS SHOULD HAVE ACCESS TO TRAINING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT EQUAL TO THAT OF EMPLOYEES IN THE PHYSICAL OFFICE.

EMPLOYERS SHOULD RESPECT REGULAR WORKING HOURS AND THE RIGHT TO DISCONNECT.

PRIOR TO INTRODUCING OR EXTENDING REMOTE WORK RULES, TRADE UNIONS AND EMPLOYERS SHOULD THOROUGHLY ASSESS AND DOCUMENT THEIR IMPACT.

5. REMOTE WORK AND TRADE UNION ORGANISING

As remote work becomes a permanent fixture in the professional landscape, it is crucial for trade unions to address the associated challenges and opportunities concerning organising, engaging workers, and negotiating collective agreements in this new work reality. **Trade unions with clear and inclusive organising strategies are more successful in organising (remote) workers, attracting new members and contributing to the renewal of the trade union collective power to bargain collectively.**

5.1 REMOTE WORK AND TRADE UNION ORGANISING: MAIN ISSUES

With remote work here to stay, the workplace is no longer the key location for trade unions to organise and recruit new members. The 'new normal' is to combine organising on the employer's premises with online organising. In addition, there is a greater demand from workers and trade union members across generations for diverse modes of communication and exchange.

Organising workers and aiming at trade union renewal in a remote work setting is not very different from organising workers who are working exclusively on the employer's premises. In both cases, a **strategy must be developed** and resources allocated. Issue-based organising and mobilising collective action work well for remote workers too. The idea is to create collective action around an issue in the form of a participatory collective bargaining approach, rather than a trade union servicing culture that solves issues for the workers. This creates active members, more empowerment, visibility, collective consciousness and a sustainable increase in membership.

Trade union organising – the renewal of trade union collective power to bargain collectively and effectively – is one of UNI Europa's key priorities.

First and foremost, trade union renewal is an *internal* analysis of how we can renew our structures and practices to be more effective in representing workers in our sectors. We must meet workers where they are at. In organising, UNI Europa EPOC (Europe's Power & Organising Centre) suggests focusing on identifying, developing and then supporting leaders in the workplace instead of focusing purely on recruiting non-members and gaining them as passive union members. When it comes to **organising remote workers**, there is a need to have a strategy, build up capacity, treat remote workers just like other workers, distinguish between greenfield and brownfield organising and invest in digital tools and how to use them.

Are the **challenges of organising remote workers** different to trade unions' general organising challenges? In the discussions held over the course of the ARCO project, UNI Europa Finance and ICTS members stated that most of their actions and tasks have not changed because of remote work, and that the COVID-19 pandemic allowed them to learn how to switch from face-to-face to online organising.

French finance sector activists respond to digital organising

A representative 2023 survey[23] of FBA-CFDT trade union members shows that they do not consider trade union activities (even the negotiation of collective agreements) and interactions with workers harder if done digitally rather than face to face. Online union meetings and recruiting new members are, however, less easy online than face-to-face. The survey also shows that many trade union representatives lack digital and online moderation skills, and need training in this.

The finance sector trade union and UNI affiliate FSU Ireland has invested quite some time, resources and staff in developing and strengthening their digital organising in the financial sector. Their best practices are useful for organising remote workers in the ICTS as well as the finance sector. In the following infobox (see infobox 5) FSU Ireland shares their best practices.

Digital Organising: Best practices from FSU Ireland

Ireland's Financial Services Union (FSU), working with EPOC, has **trained its staff, leaders and activists in the use of digital tools** such as chat, LinkedIn, video conferencing, and online polls and surveys. When organising remote workers, the following steps are recommended:

- Individual phone calls remain a key way of communicating and often workers feel freer to speak when working from home.
- Mixed online meetings with registration before all meetings to identify trade union members and non-members.
- Always do a follow-up with the non-members to sign them up to the trade union; within the scope of GDPR, this may require multiple follow-ups on the relevant topic.
- Increase use of surveys, petitions and digital actions on specific workplace issues. All these actions should generate digital leads to non-members for recruitment and follow-up.

- Face-to-face organising on 'anchor days' when most people are in the office to ensure trade union visibility remains vibrant in the physical workplace.
- Ongoing surveys on members' needs to keep the trade union agenda relevant and member-focused, as well as generating non-member digital leads.
- Train and encourage activists and trad eunion staff to build their individual LinkedIn profiles and connect with their audience. This is important in building general awareness of trade union activity but can also provide for 'direct messaging' of the audience on key issues at key moments.

23. Cfdt, SciencesPo, Ires (2023): Télétravail, organisation et pratiques syndicales dans les services: Une mise à l'épreuve des collectifs au travail?

5.2 REMOTE WORK TOOLS FOR TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVES

We can see a lack of implementation of remote work agreements and remote work policies. In background interviews with UNI Europa members from the finance and ICTS sectors, many mentioned the lack of implementation and the need to **develop actions and practical tools to foster implementation at sectoral and company levels**. Risk assessments, especially at the company and team levels, can help.

To help **identify the potential challenges and opportunities of remote work for your members, the remote work wheel from Eurofound can be a useful tool** (see figure 6 below). This wheel can be used when meeting with members, discussing their needs, planning a trade union remote work strategy and undertaking workplace mapping. Members can identify or mark the areas in which they are currently facing problems. It can help to identify issue areas, elements and measures that work well concerning remote work and those that pose challenges and need improvement. The wheel can serve as a preventive tool but it can also be used to discover challenges and conflicts that must be addressed in the collective bargaining negotiations (see figure 6). **After that, the results can be complemented with the checklist in chapter 4 to identify what and how to include remote work issues in the negotiation of collective bargaining agreements for specific challenges such as trade union organising, gender, diversity, equity and inclusion, psychosocial risks and leadership.**

FIGURE 6: REMOTE WORK: WHEEL TO IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES AT COMPANY LEVEL

Source: Eurofound 2023[24]
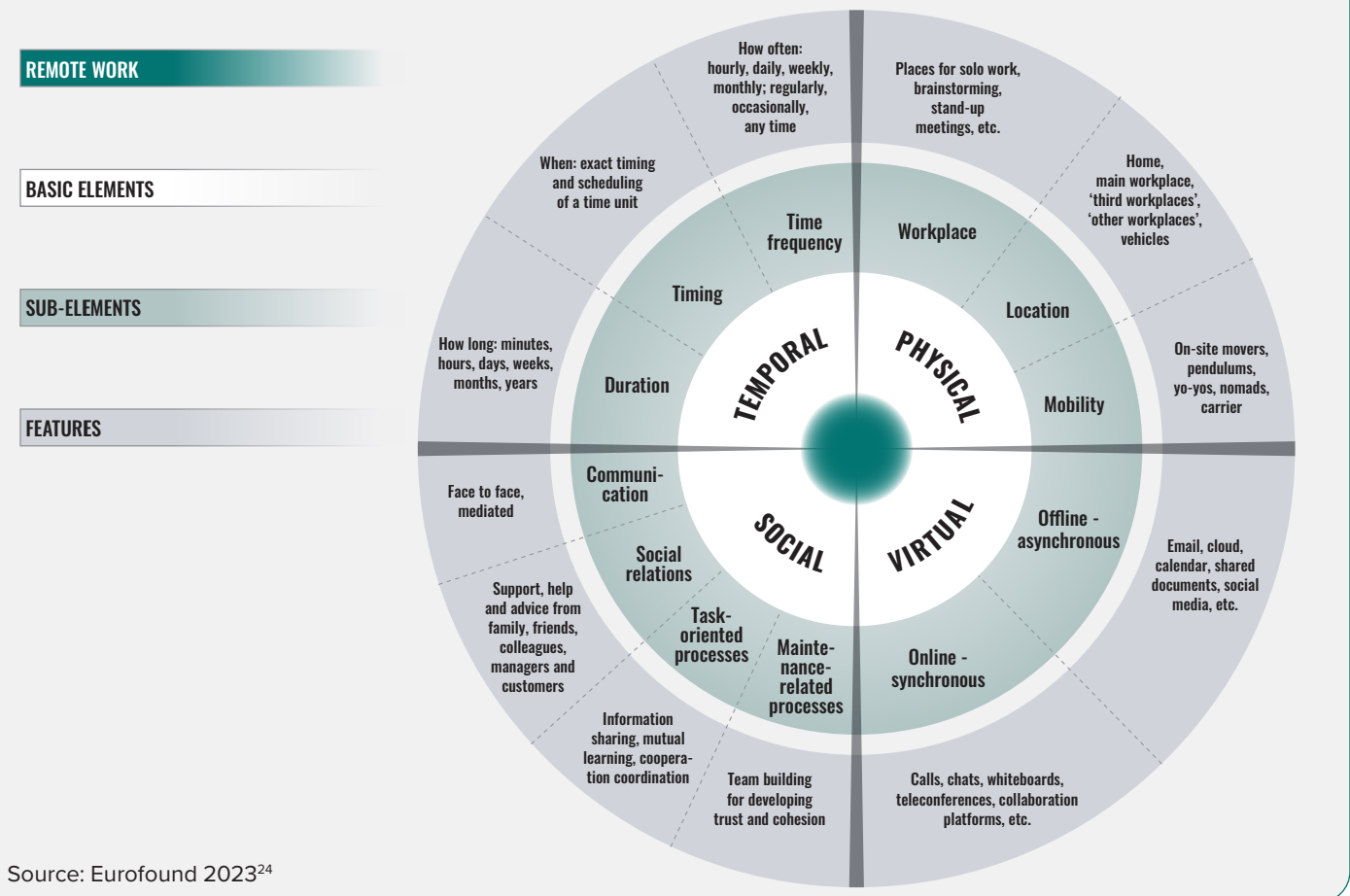
24. Eurofound (2023), Hybrid work in Europe: Concept and practice, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, figure 4, page 14. https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/system/files/2023-05/ef22011en.pdf.

Another preventive tool that is very helpful to use at workplace level, especially for leaders managing remote workers, is the risk assessment tool developed by Prevent association, a member of UNI Europa. The following infobox 6 explains the checklist leaders can use together with a remote worker to analyse the risk for the latter when working remotely and to define appropriate actions based on the results. You can access this checklist in English here.

INFOBOX 6.1

Risk assessment for remote work

Engineers of Sweden, a member of UNI Europa and active in the ICTS sector, recommend that employees and employers use a checklist for assessing risks when working remotely.

- Unions and employers developed this checklist together within their joint training and research organisation called "Prevent"[25].

- The checklist contains clear questions on the physical, organisational and social work environment for remote work. It includes questions on health and safety, ergonomics, digital skills, collaboration with colleagues, and stress. For each category there are various questions. **Each question has a simple colour-coded risk classification (green=low/yellow=medium/red=high) and an action that can be agreed upon depending on the degree of risk.**

- The questions focus on work that is not carried out on the employer's premises. **The checklist is completed by the worker and manager together**, but the worker may wish to consider the questions in advance. It is a mapping tool combined with action points and next steps. It can be complemented with pictures from the worker's workplace at home to document possible issues of ergonomics, health and safety etc.

Fråga	Ja	Nej	Riskbedömning Låg Med Hög	Åtgärd	Ansvarig för utförande	Klart när?	Kontroll utfört datum
1. Finns det fungerande informations- och kommunikationskanaler om verksamheten?							

prevent
ARBETSMILJÖ I SAMVERKAN
SVENSKT NÄRINGSLIV, LO & PTK

Företag

Deltagare

Checklistan innehåller frågor om den fysiska, organisatoriska och sociala arbetsmiljön vid distansarbete. Frågorna fokuserar på kontorsarbete som inte utförs i arbetsgivarens egna lokaler. Checklistan fylls i av arbetstagare och chef tillsammans, men arbetstagaren kan gärna fundera igenom frågorna i förväg.

Enkel riskklassning

Klassning av risk	Behov av åtgärd
Låg Försumbar eller liten risk	Eventuell åtgärd
Medel Viss risk	Åtgärdas så långt rimligt
Hög Allvarlig eller mycket allvarlig risk	Åtgärdas snarast. Vid mycket allvarlig risk krävs åtgärd innan arbetet utförs.

25. Prevent Arbetsmiljö i samverkan Svensk Näringsliv, LO och PTK Text: Lisa Markström och Amanda Wolgast, Prevent. Produktion: Prevent, www.prevent.se https://www.prevent.se/

■ **Explanations and Tips for Using the Checklist.**

ANSWER COLUMN

The checklist contains pre-prepared questions to facilitate the assessment. Skip questions that are not relevant by, for example, drawing a line in the answer column. Otherwise, the questions are answered with "Yes" or "No" – and preferably only in exceptional cases with "partially."

RISK COLUMN

Carry out a risk assessment for the relevant questions. Depending on the situation, the risk assessment can be done directly when answering the question or at a later stage with the help of experts who are not present during the assessment. We recommend the simple risk classification you see here alongside. It may also be appropriate to simultaneously mark the questions that need to be addressed, for example, by drawing a circle around the risk assessment made. Now you have created a written risk assessment that all businesses with employees must carry out according to AFS 2001:1.

ACTION

The action is developed in consultation with those affected and, if necessary, with the help of (external) expertise. The action should be preceded by an analysis of what causes the risk, and the proposed action should ideally include an estimate of the costs involved. The responsible manager decides on the action, who will carry it out, and by when it should be completed. Now you have created a written action plan that all businesses with employees must create according to AFS 2001:1.

RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The responsible manager, who may have delegated the practical work to another person. In such a case, both names can be listed.

CONTROL PERFORMED, DATE

The responsible manager checks whether the action has been carried out.

Some examples of the questions raised are:

1. Is there a written risk assessment for the work environment?

2. Are safety briefings and training regularly offered to all employees?

3. Are there clear regulations and instructions for behaviour in emergency situations?

4. Is the work environment regularly checked for health risks, such as air quality or noise exposure?

5. Is there a system for employees to provide feedback or report complaints regarding working conditions?

6. Are there provisions for employees' mental health, such as stress management programs?

7. Are regular breaks and rest periods provided for employees?

8. Are work hours designed in a way that promotes the health and well-being of employees?

9. Are employees informed about potential health risks associated with their tasks?

10. Is collaboration and communication between employees promoted to ensure a healthy work culture?

6. REMOTE WORK AND DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (DEI)

AFTER COVID-19 THE NUMBER OF WOMEN WORKING REMOTELY INCREASED

Aggregated for the European level, we find that there has been a slight overall increase in women working remotely since COVID-19, and that by 2023 there are more women working remotely than men (see figure 7). This picture, however, changes when comparing across economic sectors or when looking at specific countries[26].

FIGURE 7: SHARE OF WOMEN AND MEN TELEWORKING 2019 AND 2023: SLIGHT COMPARATIVE INCREASE OF WOMEN TELEWORKING
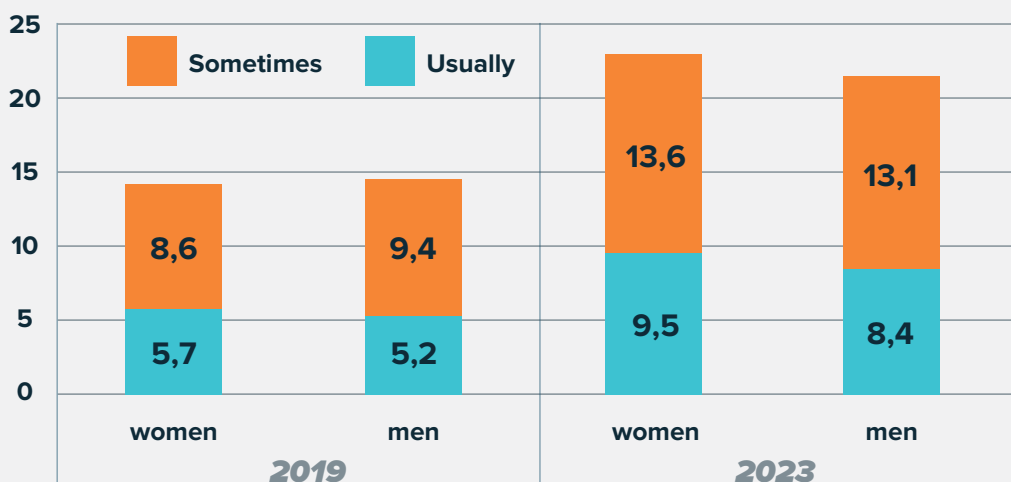
Source: Eurofound 2022, page 10, figure 4 with updates by Oscar Vargas Llave[27]

The characteristics of a remote worker differ a lot across Europe. A survey conducted in France finds that the typical remote worker is female, aged between 30 and 39, and works in the private sector as an executive or engineer.[28]

26. Twing project 2023.
27. Eurofound (2022a), page 10, figure 4 with updated data from Eurostat Labour Force Survey 2023 by Oscar Vargas Llave.
28. See the three surveys done in France including ICT and finance sector in 2021, 2022 and 2023: Cfdt, SciencesPo, Ires (2023): Télétravail, organisation et pratiques syndicales dans les services: Une mise à l'épreuve des collectifs au travail?, https://ires.fr/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Rapport_Teletravail_1_12_2023_2.pdf. Enquête nationale sur le télétravail (2021): dossier de presse 2021. CGT Ingés Cadres Techs, https://obstt.fr/wp-content/uploads/sites/47/2022/12/DOSSIER-TE%CC%81LE%CC%81TRAVAIL-UGICT-CGT-6-sept-2021-ok.pdf.
Observatoire du télétravail (2023): résultats de l'enquête 2023 (Cross-sectoral survey in France on remote work), Réalisé par l'Ugict-CGT (CGT Ingés Cadres Techs), https://www.cgt.fr/sites/default/files/2023-12/Dossier_Presse-Observatoire_Teletravail-Ugict-CGT.pdf.

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Remote work can pose different challenges and opportunities for different people and groups of people such as women, people with disabilities, people experiencing domestic violence, etc[29].

While equality means treating everyone equally, **equity means providing resources and opportunities that fit the specific needs or circumstances of each person or group. Only in this way can we reach an equal outcome**[30].

FIGURE 8: DIVERSITY, EQUALITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

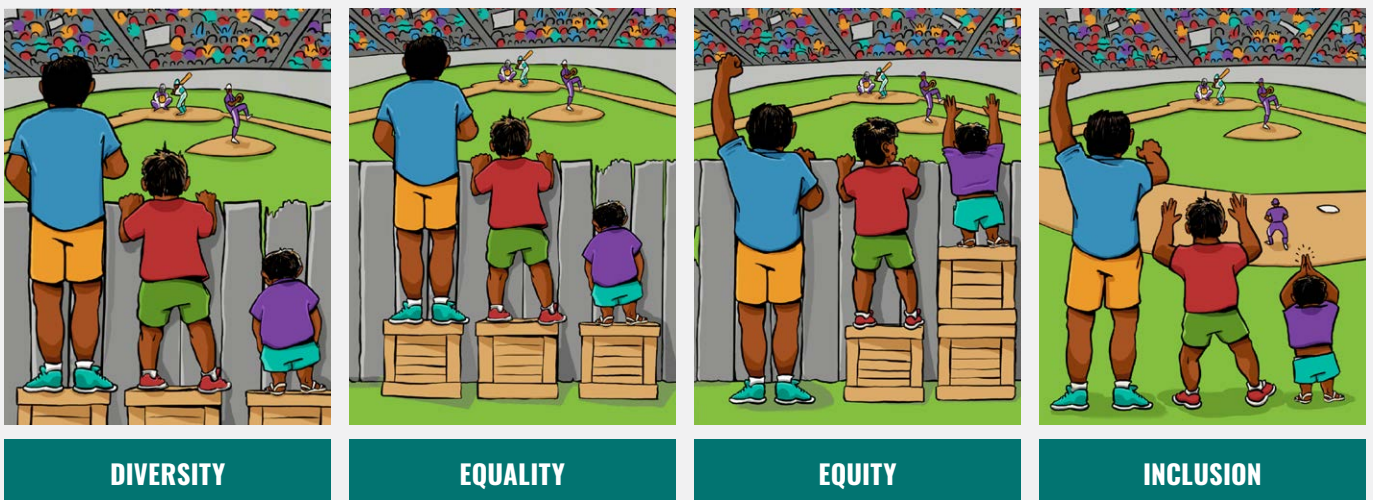| DIVERSITY | EQUALITY | EQUITY | INCLUSION |

Image Credit: Interaction Institute for Social Change | Artist: Angus Maguire, interactioninstitute.org and madewithangus.com

29. European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (2024) Discussion Paper: Exploring the gender dimension of telework: implications for occupational safety and health, https://osha.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Gender%20telework%20and%20OSH_en_0.pdf.
30. World Economic Forum, Charlotte Edmond (2023: International Women's Day: What's the difference between equity and equality?, https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/03/equity-equality-women-iwd/#:~:text=Equity%20means%20that%20we%20provide%20resources

REMOTE WORK AND GENDER EQUALITY AND EQUITY

The impact of remote work on gender equality and equity is not yet clear: *"while the pandemic has hit women harder than men, and the risk of the reversal of women's hard-won gains is real, the* *pandemic has also opened up new opportunities to correct structural gender inequalities. Teleworking, if adequately organised, may be one such opportunity."*[31]

INFOBOX 7

According to CWU Ireland, remote work can have gender-related advantages and disadvantages

ADVANTAGES:

✔ allows greater flexibility to meet family caring requirements

✔ addresses corporate culture of "presenteeism" and temporary absences that affect women disproportionately

DISADVANTAGES:

✖ the impact of working long hours has negative repercussions on the health of all workers, but long hours are more likely to cause serious health problems for women.[32]

✖ reinforces the stereotype of the man as the breadwinner, who receives preferential treatment in terms of pay and career, also known as the "fatherhood premium" and the "motherhood penalty".[33]

REMOTE WORK, BLURRED BOUNDARIES AND REINFORCED TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES

As explored in section 4 , remote work risks blurring the lines between work and private life, and thus reinforcing traditional gender roles[34]. A Eurofound survey on remote work found that while, overall, both men and women report having a better work-life balance when working remotely, men still report a better work-life balance than women.[35]

Overall, women are more likely to work remotely on a regular basis to combine work with caring arrangements. This means that not only is there a need to integrate equity and non-discrimination in a remote work collective agreement, but that we also must address wider societal issues such as possibilities of childcare at the workplace, more state-supported quality childcare or other measures to allow parents to divide housework and care more equally. There is a need for more policies at company, sector and national level to encourage men to take up flexible working arrangements. We also need to challenge traditional management styles of presenteeism, micromanagement and intrusive surveillance.

31. Tomei, Manuela, ILO: Teleworking: A Curse or a Blessing for Gender Equality and Work-Life Balance? in Intereconomics, Volume 56, 2021, Number 5.
32. Franklin, P., Zwysen, W., & Piasna, A. (2022). Temporal dimensions of job quality and gender: exploring differences in the associations of working time and health between women and men. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health
33. ILO (2018): Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work | International Labour Organization authored by Laura Addati, Umberto Cattaneo, Valeria Esquivel and Isabel Valarino.
34. The ILO has called upon governments to take measures in consultation with social partners to address the fact that flexible working arrangements, including telework, increase the unequal distribution of family responsibilities and unpaid work between men and women (Achieving gender equality at work, ILO 2023, https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_870823.pdf).
35. Eurofound (2022a), page 37, figure 20. Original data from: European Working Conditions Telephone Survey (EWCTS) 2021, https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/surveys/european-working-conditions-surveys/ewcts-2021/ewcts-2021-methodology.

This 'Flexibility Paradox' is a concept that has been explored by Professor Heejung Chung, Professor of Work and Employment at King's Business School, whose research shows, how flexible hours can also lead to workers working longer and harder, impacting on their work-life balance – and on women's in particular – and helping to increase gender inequalities in the labour market.[36]

PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION

Post-COVID-19, mental health is one of the main reasons for sick leave and leaving a job (Eurofound 2023)[37]. A 2023 UNI Europa Equal Opportunities survey found that **social isolation in particular is one of the main psychosocial risks for workers working remotely.**[38] Various trade unions as well as employers across Europe have reacted with psychosocial risk assessments or general risk assessments for remote workers (see also risk assessment by Engineers of Sweden in section 5.2). **French finance and ICTS sector trade unions have undertaken several large surveys on psychosocial risks and mental health (see examples from CFDT in this publication). The Croatian trade union HST has increasingly noticed problems concerning mental health, the right to disconnect, the lack of work-life balance, and disadvantages for women in the ICTS sector.**

INFOBOX 8

**Negotiating agreements on working conditions and quality of life at work
– French finance sector trade union FBA-CFDT's strategy:**

1. Develop a framework of action to address issues on working conditions and quality of life at work, which should include:

- an analysis of the challenges
- indicators
- stakeholder involvement
- measures for continuous improvement, impact assessment and follow-up

2. Negotiate collective bargaining articles on:

- work-life balance
- diversity and equity for people with chronic diseases and disabilities
- remote work and the right to disconnect
- psychosocial risks and isolation
- trade union rights and the right to freedom of association

3. Include implementation, follow-up and measuring outcomes

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36. Find out more here: Chung, H. (2024). Flexible working: A deep dive into the impact of remote working on gender equity. Shape Talent, https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/278670274/Shape-Talent-Flexible-Working-whitepaper-2024.pdf. Chung, H. (2022) The Flexibility Paradox. Why Flexible Working Leads to (Self-)Exploitation, ISBN 978-1447354789. Chung, H. (2022) The flexibility paradox, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yya0lP7cy40. European Commission: Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers and Chung, H., Flexible working arrangements and gender equality in Europe, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2838/13215

37. Eurofound (2023) Psychosocial risks to workers' well-being: Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, European Working Conditions Telephone Survey 2021 series, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, https://eurofound.link/ef23001.

38. UNI Europa (2023) Eliminating violence and harassment in the world of work, EU-funded project, https://tinyurl.com/Unieuropasurvey.

REMOTE WORK AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) has estimated that the cost of gender-based violence across the EU is €366 billion a year.[39] **Domestic violence against women has worsened during and since the pandemic (United Nations Women).** Dr Hans Kluge, the Regional Director for Europe for the World Health Organization says that it is very hard to have reliable data but the data we have at the EU level is already alarming[40]. This is why in **Ireland, for example, trade unions have intensified awareness raising and training for their staff concerning gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) and especially domestic violence.** For example, CWU Ireland has negotiated ten days paid leave for members in eir, which is five days over the statutory entitlement. **The finance sector in Spain has one of the most detailed and encompassing clauses concerning GBVH in their bank sector collective agreement.**

As a trade union, it is important to raise awareness of different forms of GBVH, offer training and give members an overview of where to find help when experiencing GBVH themselves or how to offer help when another person shares the information that they are experiencing GBVH.

At the workplace, it is important to integrate issues of GBVH in collective agreements, have codes of conduct, develop a gender-based violence operational strategy, have these implemented and monitored by the social partners, aim at gender balance in leadership, and share best practices. Awareness and training at the workplace is key to this. Lastly, corporate culture matters and we need to see a corporate culture shift.

With remote work here to stay, domestic violence is a critical workplace issue and consequently, there is a duty of care from the employer. Employers need to address this topic as well as violence at work. Workers should have the right to choose whether they want to work remotely or from the employer's premises. This allows people experiencing GBVH to reduce the time exposed to the situation either at home or in the office.

DISABILITY, INCLUSION AND REMOTE WORK NEEDS MORE ATTENTION

More diverse groups of workers now have access to hybrid work arrangements since the COVID-19 pandemic. Remote work also creates opportunities for the retention of workers who already have or who acquire a disability during their working life. It also allows for greater autonomy for them to manage disability while working[41].

So far disability and inclusion are not considered adequately in remote working collective agreements. For example, the employer should be responsible for providing assistive technology. There needs to be a push for more state-supported disability provisions.

39. The European Institute for Gender Equality (2021) The costs of gender-based violence in the European Union, https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/20213229_mh0921238enn_pdf.pdf. Several legal instruments have been developed at EU level that also impact on female workers' rights, such as the work-life balance Directive (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32019L1158#P-P4Contents) and the Directive on combating violence against women and girls (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1385/oj).
40. UN regional information centre for Western Europe, https://unric.org/en/who-warns-of-surge-of-domestic-violence-as-covid-19-cases-decrease-in-europe/
41. Based on a presentation by Carol Scheffer, CWU Ireland and President of UNI World Women's Committee at UNI Global Union during the ARCO workshop on gender and diversity, equity and inclusion. See also Employers for Change and The Open Doors Initiative (2021): The Future of Work and Disability - A Remote Opportunity by Joan O'Donnell.

KNOW THE DATA/PROBLEMS CONCERNING REMOTE WORK:

- Who works remotely in your sector or a specific company, why and how often?

- What are the needs and what are the specific challenges of those working remotely?

- Are there equal conditions and accessibility in remote work?

- Is remote work adapted to individuals with special needs and/or disabilities and are risks/opportunities identified?

- Could remote work facilitate recovery for workers with physical injuries or mental health issues in a specific company?

- Can remote work facilitate a return to work after sick leave in a specific company?

- Know that victims of domestic violence can be more at risk when the home is also the workplace

- Identify where skills and training are needed: the lack of technical and digital skills is one of the main reasons for unequal conditions in remote work.

- Know that minorities and women tend to be more discriminated against when it comes to remote work than men.

7. NEW LEADERSHIP IN REMOTE WORK

From research, we know that:

"Leader behavior is the most critical dimension of employee engagement, especially in times of a crisis".[42]

Remote work and digital transformation entail not only the profound needs of lifelong learning and on the job training but also a new learning culture in organisations. This requires knowledge on how to collaborate remotely in a team, how to lead remotely, how to use AI tools to the advantage of workers' time and job content, and how to keep up to date with constantly changing technology. Organisations[43] need to offer leaders and workers alike the possibility to learn on-the-job and during working hours and to develop a modern culture of learning, including new learning formats and modern knowledge management tools and processes.

Leaders and their leadership approaches have a considerable influence on well-being, stress, mental health and burnout. The researchers Birgit Schyns and Jan Schilling find in a meta-analysis of 57 leadership studies that destructive leader behaviours are associated with low affectivity, stress, and reduced well-being of employees. Conversely, positive and constructive leadership behaviours can inspire and engage employees, contribute positively to their well-being and lead to lower turnover.[44]

Research on worker engagement, which is the workers' capacity to involve their entire selves in their work, physically, cognitively and emotionally,[45] **has recently started to incorporate the role of leadership in virtual work environments.**[46] The role of leaders, and the way they manage their employees working remotely have a significant impact on employee engagement.[47] The following infobox summarises the findings of a mixed method study including qualitative and representative quantitative survey data from 2021[48].

42. Krishnamoorthy, Raghu (2022) The Relationship between Leader Behaviors and Employee Engagement in a Virtual Work Environment. Dissertation. University of Pennsylvania ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, 2022. 29062235. https://www.proquest.com/openview/004c8a49a32a3daac516fd14d570e086/1.pdf?pq-origsite=gscholar&amp=&cbl=18750&amp=&diss=y&amp=&casa_token=0cgaBbUy-tHYAAAAA:tEkNea1g-mgdJG95BkLGZqn9cSnYM19tMcM8syl2D-pnJYWVPZSTeyM7CCpT4Oc3PdDXEWhV950, page 65.
43. Kegan, Robert and Laskow Lahey, Lisa (2016): An everyone culture. Becoming a deliberately developmental organization. Harvard Business Press.
44. Schyns, B., & Schilling, J. (2013). How bad are the effects of bad leaders? A meta-analysis of destructive leadership and its outcomes. The Leadership Quarterly, 24(1), 138–158. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2012.09.001
45. Kahn, W. A. (1990). Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. Academy of Management Journal, 33(4), 692–724. https://doi.org/10.5465/256287.
46. Krishnamoorthy, Raghu (2022).
47. Krishnamoorthy, Raghu (2022).
48. Although the study was conducted in the United States these results are applicable to Europe too. So far no research has been published of this size and strength that studies the role of leadership on employees working remotely in Europe.

The influence of leadership on remote worker engagement

- Leader behaviours that prioritise results over employee availability or presence have a favourable effect on the engagement of remote workers.

- Micromanagement leader behaviours are destructive, and micro-understanding behaviours are constructive.

- Leaders who build a nurturing relationship bring out the best in all workers. Bringing out the best, as opposed to the highest productivity, enhances engagement.

- Autonomy (relates to self-latitude: the freedom and agency that workers have in organising their work duties, hours and surroundings), not flexibility (or a given latitude, refers to the express license provided to workers to behave within the leader's established parameters) enhances engagement.

Source: Krishnamoorthy, Raghu (2022), 189-215[49].

These results show that traditional leadership approaches do not positively influence the engagement of remote workers in a post-COVID-19 world. Leadership behaviour and actions involving compliance, control, micromanagement and direction are not what influence positively but rather what a leader does to motivate employees, especially in a remote setting (see infobox 9 above).

If leaders want to address issues of reducing psychosocial risks, strengthening mental health, and worker well-being (which in turn also positively influence performance) they should refrain from using traditional leadership approaches, especially in remote work settings.[50] In turn, leaders should learn and follow contemporary leadership approaches such as transactional and transformational leadership.[51]

This demands a major shift in how leaders lead in classical, traditional, hierarchically organised workplaces. This shift is only possible if there are changes at the organisational level as well as at the leadership level. At the organisational level, the structure of the organisation needs to flatten hierarchies, install cross-functional teams, decentralise decision-making, be agile and adaptive to change, flexible and scalable and have a holistic approach to transformation.[52] At the leadership level, people who have transformational leadership possess four attributes in varying degrees: they are idealised and charismatic (highly liked role models), demonstrate inspirational motivation (optimistic about goal attainment), are intellectually stimulating (encourage critical thinking and problem-solving), and are considerate (show empathy and purpose) (Bass, Avolio, & Atwater, 1996[53]).

49. Krishnamoorthy, Raghu (2022), 189-215.
50. Krishnamoorthy, Raghu (2022).
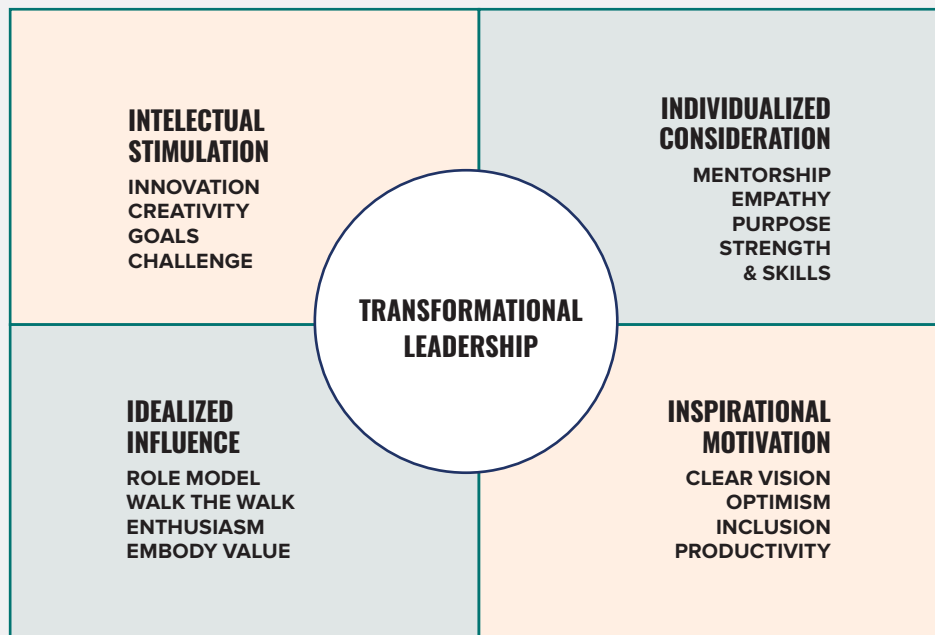51. Krishnamoorthy, Raghu (2022) and Avolio, B. J., Reichard, R. J., Hannah, S. T., Walumbwa, F. O., & Chan, A. (2009). A meta-analytic review of leadership impact research: Experimental and quasiexperimental studies. The Leadership Quarterly, 20(5), 764–784.
52. Bernard M. Bass, Ronald E. Riggio (2005) Transformational Leadership, Psychology Press, New York. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410617095.
53. Bass, B. M., Avolio, B. J., & Atwater, L. (1996). The transformational and transactional leadership of men and women. Applied Psychology: An International Review, 45, 5–34

FIGURE 9: ATTRIBUTES OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

INTELLECTUAL STIMULATION
INNOVATION
CREATIVITY
GOALS
CHALLENGE

INDIVIDUALIZED CONSIDERATION
MENTORSHIP
EMPATHY
PURPOSE
STRENGTH
& SKILLS

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

IDEALIZED INFLUENCE
ROLE MODEL
WALK THE WALK
ENTHUSIASM
EMBODY VALUE

INSPIRATIONAL MOTIVATION
CLEAR VISION
OPTIMISM
INCLUSION
PRODUCTIVITY

Source: Chioma Ugochukwu (2024), graphic on page 1[54]

INFOBOX 10

For leaders managing remote teams, this means the following leadership competences and actions:

- Maintaining effective communication
- Building and maintaining team cohesion
- Monitoring productivity without micromanaging
- Managing performance and providing feedback
- Supporting mental health and well-being
- Building trust and accountability

- Adapting to technology and digital tools
- Balancing the needs of a team working from home as well as from the employers' premises
- Keeping motivation and engagement high
- Following the organisation's remote work policy
- Regularly doing a remote work risk assessment with the remote workers

Source: Nicole Helmerich, own compilation[55]

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54. Chioma Ugochukwu (2024): Transformational Leadership Style: How to Inspire and Motivate, January 29, 2024,
https://www.simplypsychology.org/what-is-transformational-leadership.html
55. Based on Aaron Dignan (2019): Brave New Work. Portfolio/Penguin, and Dark Horse Innovation (2023):
Future Organization Playbook. Murmann Publishers.

In line with the attributes of the transformational leadership in a remote work setting, leaders need to support remote workers and teams working remotely to develop and strengthen the following team competences:

- Strong communication skills
- Self-management and time management skills
- Digital literacy
- Adaptability
- A collaborative mindset
- Emotional intelligence and empathy

- Conflict resolution skills
- Trust and reliability
- Resilience and stress management
- Inclusivity and cultural awareness
- Problem-solving and decision-making skills

Source: Nicole Helmerich, own compilation[56]

Transformational leadership needs leadership training, knowledge, awareness and moreover, a shift in mindset. This is not only important due to the needs and requests of remote workers but also for the younger generations who are entering the workforce and are requesting a mix of transformational and servant leadership from their superiors.[57] This means that leaders take on new roles and new leadership tasks. Refer to the overview in the infobox 12 below.

INFOBOX 12

New roles as a leader and new leadership tasks

- **The leader as a visionary:** uphold and convey the purpose of the organisation, because the purpose is the prerequisite for autonomous action, development of a common vision and translation of the vision into concrete goals
- **The leader as an encourager:** believe in success, duly celebrate progress made and show appreciation for it
- **The leader as a coach:** coaching as the key to accelerated development and better results. A good coach really listens, helps to recognise and build on strengths and gives regular feedback

- **The leader as the final authority:** demands personal responsibility and decisions, does not do everything for the employees. He/she discloses conflicts and ensures that they are resolved, but only takes on this task in an emergency - and, yes, the leader still decides, but less than before
- **Another role:** identifying and developing junior staff
- Focus on the essentials in the five leadership roles and decentralisation of leadership: shifting tasks, responsibility and decision-making authority to the team

Source: Insa Klasing (2019): The 2-hour boss

This new leadership has implications on what to negotiate with the employer in collective bargaining agreements for remote workers.

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56. Based on Aaron Dignan (2019) and Dark Horse Innovation (2023).
57. Dyah Gandasari, Diena Dwidienawati, David Tjahjana. (2023) Gen Z, which one: Transformational or Servant Leadership? International Journal of Economics and Management Systems, 8, 68-78. https://www.iaras.org/iaras/filedownloads/ijems/2023/007-0008(2023).pdf.

8. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Remote work is here to stay, especially in the ICTS and finance sectors. To ensure that workers benefit from it, there is a need to regulate remote work and negotiate collective agreements with the employer. Designing clear actions for implementation, feedback mechanisms, survey data and evaluation help to improve the collective agreements over time.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REMOTE WORK:

Strengthen the right to remote work as well as the right to work in the office: Remote work should be voluntary and reversible. Workers should have the possibility to work exclusively on the premises of the employer. In some cases, employers put clauses in the remote work agreement that allow them to call employees back to the office ad hoc. Furthermore, in some countries, employers use this clause to limit and reduce remote work and make employees go back to the office full time. Trade unions must be aware of loopholes when negotiating remote work collective agreements.

Negotiate remote work agreements: there is no need to reinvent the wheel. To decide which elements to include, combine the needs of your members and get informed by the UNI Global Union key trade union principles for ensuring workers' rights when working remotely (consider the checklists in this publication).

The right to disconnect: to reduce psychosocial risks, blurring of lines between work and private life, overtime and work intensification in remote work, the right to disconnect is the first step in the right direction.

Psychosocial risks: trade unions and employers need to tackle this issue. Start with a survey among your members and build your actions from there. Integrate issues of mental health and psychosocial risks in collective agreements, train managers, trade union staff and workers and raise awareness.

Zero tolerance for domestic violence and gender-based violence and harassment: Domestic violence and GBVH in general have increased, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a need to include these issues in remote work collective agreements. Employers have a duty of care. Trade unions need to train their staff and raise awareness.

Member-focused development of your remote work policy and strategy: Know the burning issues of your members concerning remote work. Co-design and campaign with your active members around their burning issues and build your remote work strategy from there.

Implementation and monitoring focus: Once a remote work collective agreement has been negotiated, it is crucial to follow up and support its good implementation. Trade unions should regularly evaluate agreements and their implementation.

Organising focus on leaders and active members: issue-based organising and a participatory collective bargaining approach attract, identify and strengthen union members ready to take leadership and form an active part in (hybrid) organising.

Strengthen equity and ensure non-discrimination in remote work: ensure non-discrimination, e.g. concerning pay, career development, and job security in cases of restructuring for (remote) workers. Create actions to achieve equity in remote work for all genders and minorities, and foster inclusion of people with special needs. Integrate this in collective agreements as well as design actions for implementation.

Modern leadership and hybrid work skills: modern leadership and skills training for managers and workers in hybrid teamwork, communication and collaboration reduces psychosocial risks and isolation in remote work.

9. ANNEX/BIBLIOGRAPHY

NUMBER OF INTERVIEWEE FOR ANONYMISATION	DATE OF INTERVIEW (INTERVIEWER DR. NICOLE HELMERICH)	POSITION OF INTERVIEWEE
1	July 20, 2023	Trade Union representative, Sweden
2	January 23, 2024	Trade Union representative, Spain, steering committee member of the project
3	September 6, 2023	UNI Europa staff
4	July 18, 2023	Senior researcher at the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI)
6	February 22, 2024	Senior researcher at the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI)
7	July 26, 2023	Senior researcher at the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI)
8	January 25, 2024	Trade Union representative, Sweden, steering committee member of the project
9	August 16, 2023	Trade Union representative, Malta, steering committee member of the project
10	February 15, 2024	Trade Union representative, France, steering committee member of the project
12	January 30, 2024	Trade Union representative, Ireland, steering committee member of the project
13	March 13, 2024	Trade Union representative, Croatia, steering committee member of the project
16	August 10, 2023	Trade Union representative, Finland, steering committee member of the project
17	February 2, 2024	UNI Europa staff
19	January 18, 2024	Trade Union representative, Ireland
20	January 31, 2024	Trade Union representative, Switzerland
21	February 2, 2024	Trade Union representative, Finland

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YOU CAN FIND ALL LITERATURE CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT IN THE FOOTNOTES AT THE BOTTOM OF EACH PAGE.