

JOURNALISTS WORKING FROM HOME?

A LABOUR RIGHT PERSPECTIVE FOR A HYBRID FUTURE

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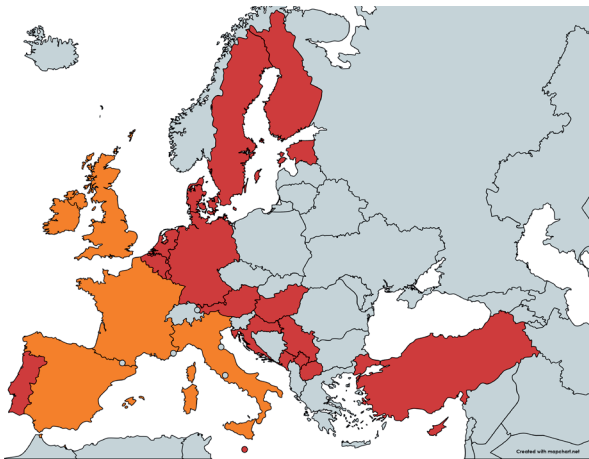
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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this survey is to map out the existing practices and gather information to develop better policy to ensure the fair and safe working conditions for journalists when telework/home office practices continue to exist after the pandemic. In "normal" circumstances, home working arrangements are implemented on a voluntary basis between employers and workers, often accompanied by a signed agreement setting out terms and conditions. However, during and since the Covid-19 pandemic, home working has been imposed on workers, including journalists, as a compulsory way of working. This happened first as a public health measure and then as a way to develop or to impose new forms of work arrangement.

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) has been very outspoken on labour rights of journalists since the outbreak of the pandemic¹, focusing mainly on health and safety issues for journalists. Some international organisations such as the UNESCO also investigated the possible long-term impact of the pandemic on labour conditions and conflicts². The present survey summarises some of these elements and aims at looking at future perspectives for journalists' unions and associations in times of "hybrid work".

Methodology



In order to draft this survey, the EFJ Labour rights expert group (LAREG) prepared and circulated a questionnaire (see copy in Annex) to its affiliated organisations across Europe³. This short survey aims at being accurate but not exhaustive: we received 20 answers to the questionnaire coming from 20 countries (in red on the map) and more information was received through testimonies and desk-research from other countries (un orange on the map). The content was also developed thanks to the contributions made during the webinar on 22-23 September 2021.

It is therefore fair to say that the survey provides a broad statistical overview of the situation of journalists'

unions and associations on the issue of teleworking at national level, with some examples of good practices at company level. Other data were gathered through EFJ activities and desk research.

1 <https://europeanjournalists.org/covid-19/>

2 See for example "Supporting journalism around the world in times of Covid-19" <https://en.unesco.org/news/supporting-journalism-around-world-times-covid-19> and "Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on media sustainability in Latin America", 2021, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377631_eng

3 <https://europeanjournalists.org/members/>

Unless specified otherwise, the information and quotes in this document are extracts of the replies to the questionnaire.

The main challenges and issues for journalists working from home are similar to some other professions, and the questions asked to the unions and associations of journalists took the following aspects into account:

- Is telework / home office voluntary or compulsory?
- Is telework / home office implemented on a full-time basis or a hybrid way?
- What are the main consequences in terms of salary, working-time and work-life balance?
- What are the main consequences in terms of health and safety, both physical and mental?
- Do journalists have a "right to disconnect"?

The survey also takes into account the role and the expectations of the unions and associations:

- Is telework / home office covered by national regulations?
- Is telework / home office subject to collective agreements, sectorial or at company-level?
- How to reach out to journalists at the usual working place?
- What are the plans of the unions and associations of the future where "hybrid work" will become the norm?

At the end of the survey, some key principles and recommendations to guarantee labour rights of journalists working from home are proposed.

PART 1

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF HOME OFFICE AND TELEWORK

First of all, it is important to mention the difference between telework, remote working and home office. In a recent study, the Employment Committee of the European Parliament refers to "telework and ICT-based mobile work (TICTM)"⁴. Home office is also called "WFH / working from home" by institutions like the International Labour Organisation⁵. For the purpose of this paper we can refer to the definitions used by the study of the Employment Committee of the European Parliament mentioned above:

- **Remote working:** occurs when work is fully or partially carried out outside the normal place of work, not necessarily from home
- **Telework:** generally restricted to employees and entails the use of information technology and digital devices
- **Home office/WFH:** takes place fully or partly within the worker's own home, can be performed by both dependent and independent workers

Given the mobile nature of journalism, both telework and WFH aspects are taken into consideration here, with a priority to the home office as an organised and daily alternative to a fixed "newsroom office".

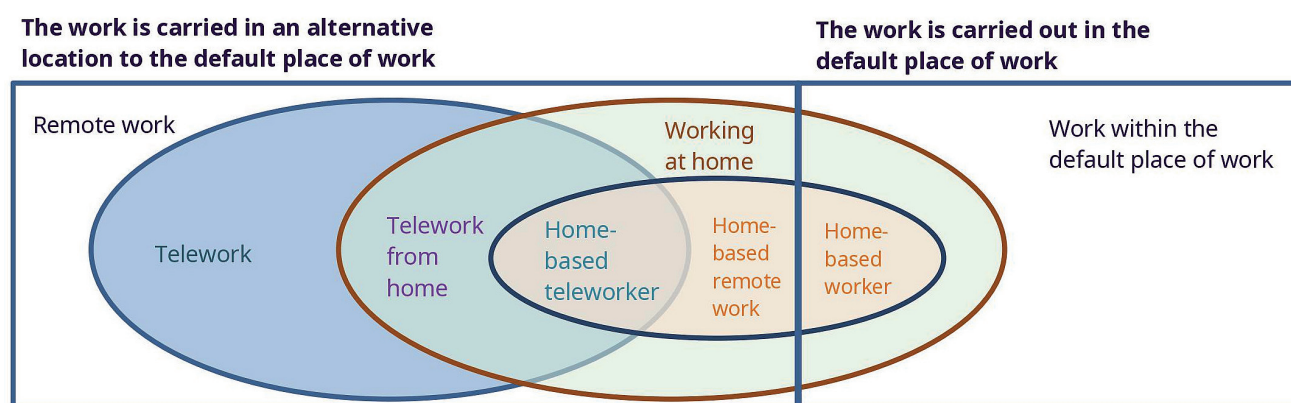
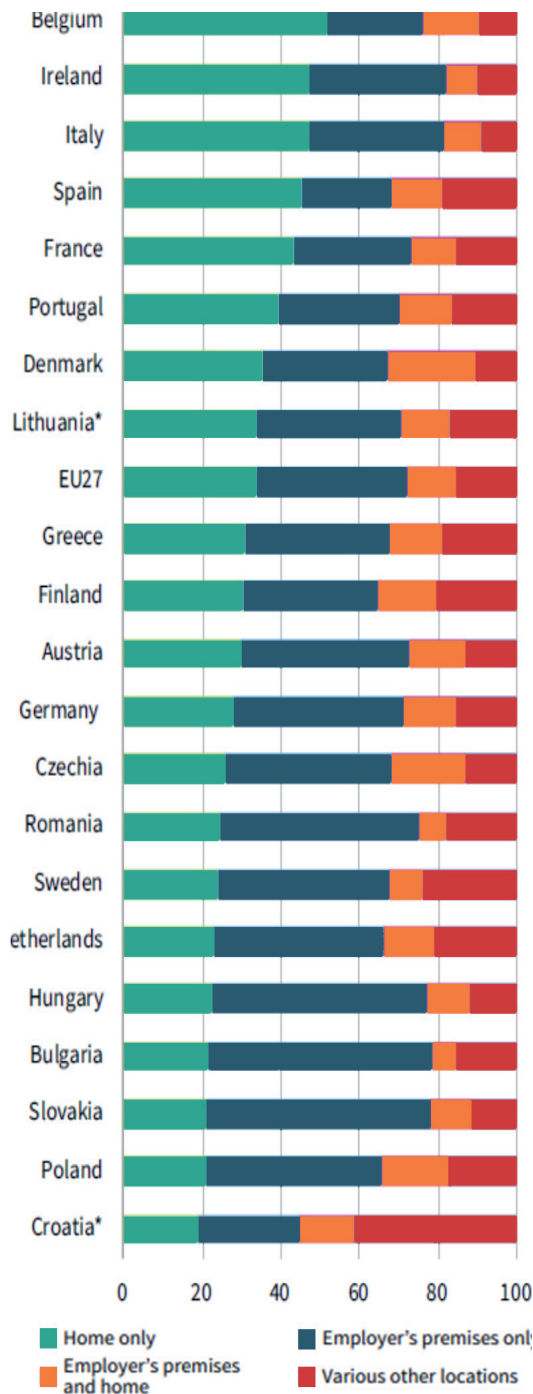


Fig 1. – Home office, telework and remote work Source: "COVID-19: Guidance for labour statistics data collection", Geneva, ILO, 2020, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms_747075.pdf

4 "The impact of teleworking and digital work on workers and society", 2021 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/662904/IPOL_STU\(2021\)662904_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/662904/IPOL_STU(2021)662904_EN.pdf)

5 "An employers' guide on working from home in response to the outbreak of COVID-19" Geneva, ILO, 2020: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---act_emp/documents/publication/wcms_745024.pdf

Labour rights issues with telework/home office



Notes: *Low reliability; Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta and Slovenia not included due to insufficient number of cases.

For several decades, in particular in media, increased digitalisation and use of digital tools lead to a “normadisation” of work, either on a voluntary basis in the case of home office, or due to the very nature of journalism involving travels and meetings with sources, in the case of mobile work. This may have brought certain economic and material benefits to employers and workers (e.g. increased flexibility and autonomy, more possibilities to ensure work-life balance, reduced commuting times, etc.). However, the massive increase of home office since the Covid-19 pandemic also led to negative developments, whereby employers create a misleading perception for their workers that they should be always available and connected for professional reasons outside of the agreed working hours, with the increased risk of blurring the work-life balance. This aspect of work-life balance is even more critical for women journalists, given that during and after the pandemic, women carry out most of the domestic tasks, which of course is getting worse when home from home.

These changes also lead to certain changes of workers' labour rights, such as fair remuneration between “newsroom workers” and “home workers”, unremunerated overtime or the non-respect of working time, an increase in workload, etc. According to a broad survey made in 2020 by Eurofound⁶, 27% of respondents working from home reported that they had worked in their free time to meet work demands. Although workers feel “more efficient” when working at home, up to 70% of them also tend to work overtime and pay for equipment at their own cost⁷, according to a survey covering 10.000 workers published in France in September 2021 by the trade union CGT.

Therefore, workers may also suffer more from physical and mental health and safety problems: musculoskeletal disorders, techno-addiction/stress, physical isolation, emotional/physical exhaustion and burnouts.

In addition, connected professions such as journalists may

6 “COVID-19 unleashed the potential for telework – How are workers coping?”, Eurofund, June 2020

7 <https://ugictcgt.fr/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2021/09/DOSSIER-PRESSE-TE%CC%81LE%CC%81TRAVAIL-UGICT-CGT-6-sept-2021.pdf>

be subject to monitoring processes through mobile phones or other devices to obtain GPS tracking information about their actual location or daily routines. The absence of new contacts also raises questions of openness and diversity: instant messaging and information-sharing software theoretically allow people to break down barriers and get in touch with many people, but paradoxically over the past 18 months, many people have mainly communicated with their immediate colleagues through video-conferencing.

These changes are part of long-term trends that largely preceded the Covid-19 crisis: flexibility, individualisation of work, rationalisation of space, with the reduction of square metres or flex office (absence of allocated offices).

There are also new ways of office management with the delegation of administrative tasks to employees, who register their own holidays or travel expenses via specific online tools or applications.

Will the Covid-19 pandemic be an "accelerator" of these transformations? It is a bit early to say. But surely it created specific challenges also for journalists and media professionals.

Specific challenges for journalists and home office

As reported by US academic Mary Meehan in the NiemanLab⁸, bad habits in the newsroom still need to be addressed for home office: *"in order for work-from-home to be successful and be a viable option for newsrooms, they have to correct issues that existed in pre-pandemic times, from technological inequality to toxic office culture. It can't just be the same as always, with a change of scenery"*.

Home office and telework imply relying on online communication only. This modifies the working relations, but in the case of journalists, it also raises essential questions of working methods and protection of privacy, not to mention the specific issue of confidentiality of sources, which is outside of the scope of this survey. For example, thanks to technology, it is perfectly possible for an employer to see the flow of information sent or received by employees, but also his/her online behaviour during and after work, in particular on social networks. But, as reminded by the Italian journalist Alessandra Costante and General Secretary of the union FNSI, "We all work on a collective work, which is the one that will then go on television, online or in print. Doing this remotely is complicated, if not impossible. The news, the work of individual and collective ingenuity, becomes an oxymoron if packaged by journalists locked within four walls. And we journalists risk being mere executors of something that is decided elsewhere.

Not only that: despite the powerful infrastructural connection, the technological

⁸ In NiemanLab, 3 August 2020: <https://www.niemanlab.org/2020/08/newsrooms-can-prosper-with-remote-work-but-they-have-to-make-the-right-adjustments-first/>

upgrade that companies are preparing to carry out, the danger is to lose the emotional connection with the society and with colleagues, which is so important for us. This is a leap into the past, to the top-down organization of the 1950s editorial offices, paradoxically favoured by the development of technologies"⁹. Also Jens, an Austrian staff journalist, thinks that telework has a "huge impact" on journalists: *"stories very often develop with discussions. You talk to experts before the actual interview. I have the impression that people talk more openly when you meet them in person, than when you do an interview via zoom. In my opinion, investigative work is hardly possible at all because a source would fear that a call is being recorded or tapped"*.

This may have professional consequences in the long term, as pointed out by the Director of the Spanish El Diario, Ignacio Escolar quoted in the *Cuadernos de periodistas*: *"A newsroom is a training ship where young people learn from veterans, and this is lost with telework, since young people do not have references"*¹⁰. This confirmed by a survey made by the Reuters institute showing that "more than three-quarters (77%) [of respondents] say that remote working has made it harder to build and maintain relationships in a team"¹¹.

During the pandemic, the trauma of experiencing it and covering it had an impact on health, both mental and physical. But once home office or hybrid working time between a newsroom and home becomes the "new normal", both employers and journalists themselves need to look into the impact on the quality of their work. Unions/associations and employers need to address some aspects such as physical and mental health of remote workers, the "tech gap" between homes with different access to internet and equipment. This is particularly important in broadcasting, where journalists are regularly asked to execute technical duties, such as editing the audio-visual content at home. Home office for journalists obviously also has an impact on the relations between journalists and their colleagues, but also journalists and their sources. Finally, the organisation of the "traditional" newsroom may also change and adapt to "hybrid" forms of work.

9 Minutes of the Seminar "Il giornalista nell'età dello smart working", 17 September 2020, <https://www.fnsi.it/upload/70/70efdf2ec9b086079795c442636b55fb/041b4508341be9bfae02df5699c7d55a.pdf>

10 <https://www.cuadernosdeperiodistas.com/el-teletrabajo-para-sobrevivir-a-la-pandemia-hablan-los-periodistas/>

11 <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/changing-newsrooms-2020-addressing-diversity-and-nurturing-talent-time-unprecedented-change>

What general protection for teleworkers and home office?

At European level, several EU instruments can be taken into account for teleworking and home office, in particular the Working Time Directive, the *Work-life Balance Directive*, the *Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions Directive* and the *European Framework Directive on Safety and Health at Work*, in addition to the European Social Partners' Framework agreements on telework (2002) and on Digitisation (2020). Each country in Europe can choose how to regulate -or not to regulate- telework, with different instruments, from "hard" law to "soft" law: state regulations, collective agreements or simple guidelines.

Some examples include:

In **Romania**, according to the law adopted in 2020, *workers' representatives have access to the telework place for verifying the work conditions of teleworkers*¹². The same law also provides the labour inspectors with the competence to carry out controls at workplaces in workers' residences in order to check if labour legislation is respected and the work environment meets the occupational safety and health requirements. However, the actual implemented of this law still needs to be assessed.

In **Italy**, article 18 of law 81 of 22 May 2017 defines "smart work" as the *"mode of execution of the employment relationship, established by agreement between the parties, also with forms of organisation by phases, cycles and objectives and without precise constraints of time or place of work, with the possible use of technological tools for carrying out the work activity. The work is performed partly inside company premises and, without a fixed location, partly outside, within the limits of the maximum duration of daily and weekly working hours deriving from the law and collective bargaining"*. Article 19 of the same law provides that *"in the agreement between employer and worker on smart working, the worker's rest times must be identified as well as the technical and organisational measures necessary to ensure the disconnection of the worker from the technological work tools"*.

In countries where no regulations on telework, the latter is often included in general labour regulations such as:

In **Denmark**, all workers are subject to the Danish Working Environment Act, which also applies to teleworking from home. The Act contains rule such as the physical arrangement of the workstation and screen work, periods of rest and rest days also apply on remote work and specific requirements for telework were introduced during the pandemic, stating that *"it is the employer's duty*

¹² See <https://www.etui.org/covid-social-impact/romania/romania-law-on-teleworking-approved>

to ensure that homework can be carried out in a completely safe and healthy manner"¹³.

In **Germany**, the Workplace Ordinance (*Arbeitsstättenverordnung*) includes minimum requirements in terms of health and safety of employees such as the lighting and temperature, computer monitors and laptops. In principle the employer is obliged to provide the work equipment, including all materials. However, this is not always reflected in reality, at least not in the media sector (see below, part 2). The Working Hours Act (*Arbeitszeitgesetz*) also applies to teleworking, with regulations on maximum working hours and rest periods.

In **Finland**, as reported by the Finnish union of journalists, some telework agreements have had disputes about health and safety for teleworkers. For example, one large media company's agreement had a clause stating that *"an employee is liable for his/her own safety and health when teleworking"*. The clause was contested as wrong and illegal because the employers' general duty is to take care of the health and safety of their employees under the general rules of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, which also applies to telework. Any further agreement reducing the rights of and benefits due to employees in this field are null and void.

"I feel like I live at work": the right to disconnect

But home office also raises further fundamental questions such as the "right to disconnect", which has been discussed by social partners at national level, but not a Europe level, as the ETUC pointed out in March 2021: *"From a human rights and legal point of view, none of the relevant international and European human rights instruments explicitly and/or specifically provide for or refer for a right to disconnect"*¹⁴.

This "right to disconnect" is the main concern for many teleworkers across Europe, but especially for journalists who are often "hyper-connected" to mails and social networks to follow the 24/7 news flow. A journalist from Austria confirmed for the present survey that he has *"more or less the same amount of time, however the workload has shifted. You're more or less always on duty – you get used to working in the morning, at noon, at night. Work and off-work time start to mix"*.

¹³ <https://at.dk/spoergsmaal-svar/c/covid-19/hjemmearbejde/krav-hjemmearbejde/>

¹⁴ ETUC Position on the Right to Disconnect, Adopted at the Executive Committee of 22-23 March 2021

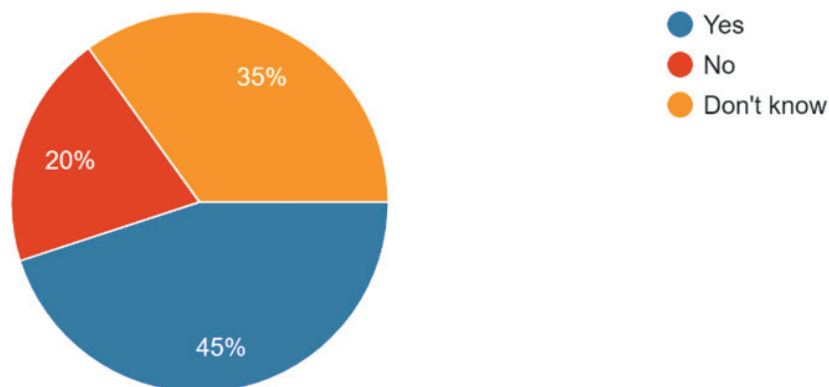
Also in the UK, a survey on WFH¹⁵ carried out by the Oxford branch of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) and published in July 2021 found that many journalists find it difficult to switch off: "one respondent wrote: *'The boundary between work and free time doesn't really exist anymore.'* Another commented: *'The commute used to provide a threshold between work and home life and leisure time that is now reduced to the three steps between the table and the couch'*". A third said simply: *'I feel like I live at work'*".

The issue of "disconnecting" seems more problematic for staff journalists who are used to working in an office, whereas long-times freelancers are more used to it. For example Lisa, a freelance journalist from Austria, said "I don't think I work more, but differently. I take breaks during the day and then sometimes work in the evening".

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of this problem and some countries introduced new rules, such as Ireland (see box below with examples from Ireland and France). The chart below, based on the replies received from the questionnaire, shows that the right to disconnect exists in nearly half the situations (9 countries out of 20), with nearly one quarter (4 countries) where the right clearly does not exist.

3.3.6. Do workers have a "right to disconnect" outside of the normal working hours?

20 responses



Yes: North Macedonia, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Macedonia, Estonia, Luxembourg, Cyprus, Finland

No: Montenegro, Croatia, Malta, Germany

¹⁵ "Beyond Lockdown - Does working from home work for you?" <https://www.nuj.org.uk/resource/publishing-industry-survey-shines-a-light-on-working-from-home.html>

Focus on the right to disconnect: the French way and the Irish way

France: since the latest version of the French Labour Law, also known as the “El Khomri Law” adopted on 21 July 2016, the right to disconnect is explicitly mentioned in the legislation, without providing a clear definition of the “disconnection” itself. The employer must define precisely the „time slots during which the employee is available“. Although the employee must remain available and active during these time slots, this does not mean that he or she does not have the right to take breaks, including lunch breaks. The law foresees that negotiations have to deal with disconnection in any company where there is trade union representation, which includes all companies with more than 50 employees. Smaller companies have to implement a non-binding “Charter”. In July 2018, the Court of Cassation recalled the obligation of a company to compensate its employees who are unduly forced to remain available (the employee concerned was able to receive a compensation of more than €60,000).

Ireland: the country introduced a Code of Practice on the “Right to Disconnect” in April 2021. This code defines the right to disconnect as “the right to disengage from work, and refrain from engaging in work-related electronic communications outside of “normal” working hours”, but it also recognises that there may be occasional, legitimate situations where it is necessary for an employer to contact employees outside of normal working hours. The Code also recognises three important elements such as:

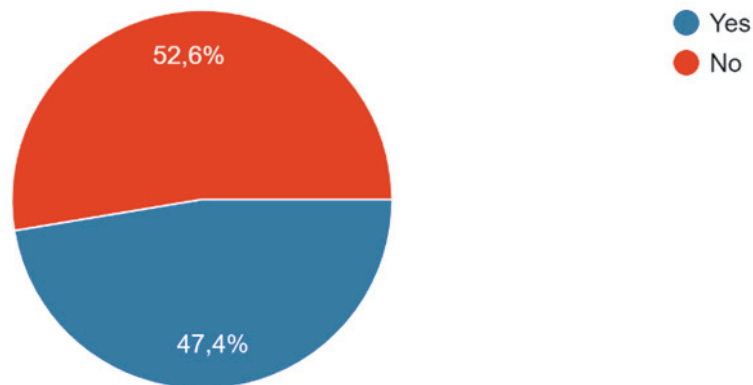
- the right of an employee to not have to routinely perform work outside their normal working hours
- the right not to be penalised for refusing to attend to work matters outside of normal working hours
- the duty to respect another person’s right to disconnect (for example: by not routinely emailing or calling outside normal working hours)

Compulsory or voluntary?

According to the replies received for the survey, teleworking is compulsory in about half the respondent countries.

3.3.1. Is telework voluntary?

19 responses



These replies have to be put in the context of the various special situations related to the Covid-19 pandemic that still exist in several countries: many western European countries went through a transition from compulsory telework to more flexible arrangements in the first half of 2021, at the time of the drafting of the present survey. It would be interesting to follow-up this particular point in 2022, provided the main pandemic will be over.

PART 2

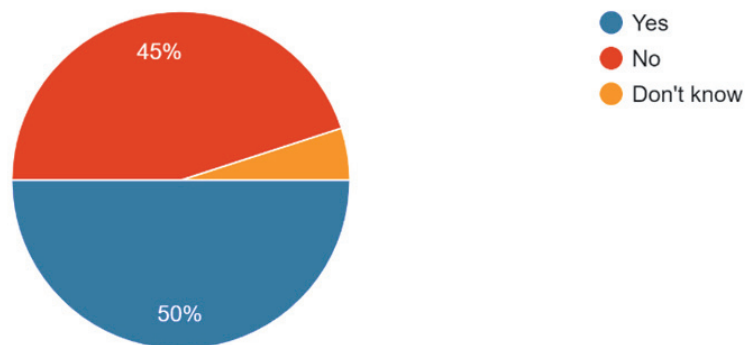
MAIN FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY

Regulatory framework: a split situation

When looking at the general regulatory framework of telework and WFH (not specifically in the media sector), only half of the respondents declared that such regulations exist:

2.2. Are there any state regulations and laws dealing with working from home / teleworking in your country?

20 responses

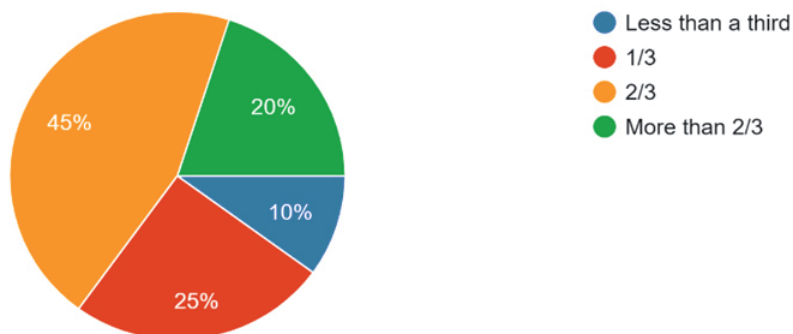


Telework of journalists by country: a majority of journalists (still) work outside the newsroom

So far there was little information available about the proportion of journalists teleworking or working from home. The survey showed that a huge proportion of journalists is (still) working outside the newsroom: 2/3 or more of them are teleworking in most of the responding countries (65%), either on a permanent basis or several days a week.

2.1. What is the estimated proportion of journalists in your country working from home since the pandemic?

20 responses



Example: in Portugal, the journalists' union clarifies rules of teleworking for journalists

Since telework is no longer mandatory in Portugal since 1st August 2021, the journalists' union (SJ) produced a "Frequently asked questions" section on its website about teleworking, which remains "recommended when possible". The SJ also proposes legal services to its members to analyse specific situations and clarify doubts. The main rules in Portugal are:

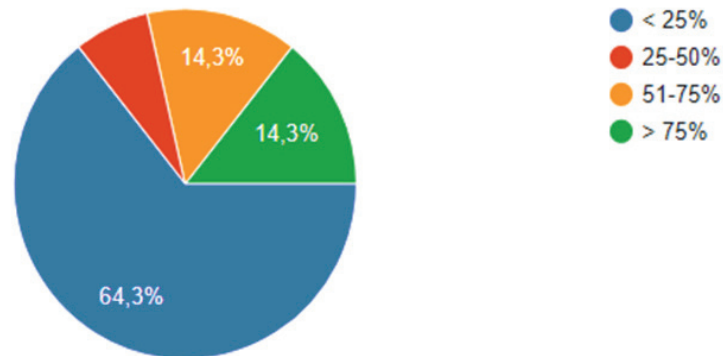
- Journalists cannot decide to stay in telecommuting unilaterally, just by informing the company. Home office has therefore to be formally agreed between employer and employee.
- Home office is still mandatory in case the employer is unable to guarantee physical distance at the workplace or work shifts, which are still mandatory by law to avoid close contacts.
- The only legal exceptions concerning the situation of the workers are covered by a specific law covering "exceptional situations" such as immune-depression, chronic diseases, disability with a degree of incapacity equal to or greater than 60%, or the worker who has children or other dependent dependents under the age of 12, or, regardless of age, with a disability or chronic illness.
- For those who stay telework, the employer must provide the necessary "work and communication equipment" to perform the tasks. When this is not possible and the worker agrees, the work can be done through any means available to the worker, but the employer still has to ensure the adaptation of the equipment to the inherent needs, such as the computer programmes necessary to perform the services.
- Expenses of the work and communication equipment, as well as installation and maintenance costs, are borne by the employer. The Government has also stated that, according to its interpretation of the law, employers must bear internet and telephone expenses related to telework. If, for example, the employee does not have an internet connection at home, or if the connection is too weak for a professional performance, the company will have to ensure the connection.
- If there is an increase in consumption of electricity, water or other additional charges, the employer is not obliged to pay for it; however the SJ asks employers to do so. On a voluntary basis, a monthly payment for extra costs can be agreed between home workers and their employer. The worker has to prove that the increase in expenses was directly caused by teleworking and demonstrate the amount of this increase.

Certain allowances such as meal vouchers and transport allowance are maintained, by law or by collective agreements, even for teleworkers.

Telework at company and sector-level: a clear lack of collective agreement at company-level

3.2.1. What is the estimated percentage of the whole media sector with such policy/collective agreement provision on telework/home-office?

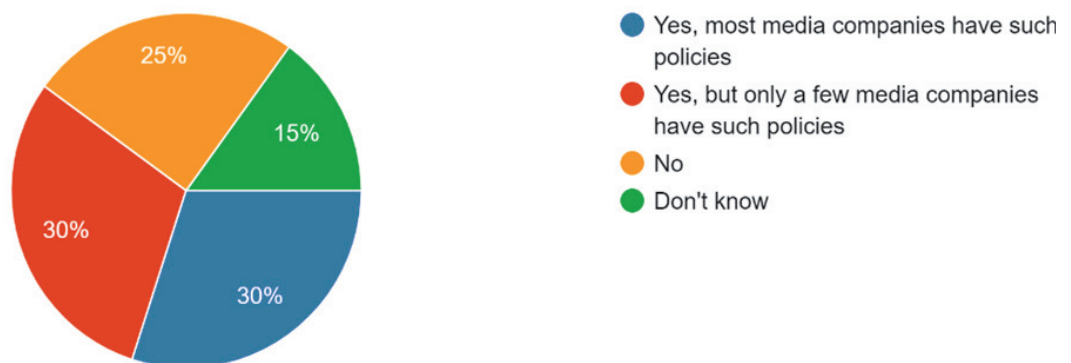
14 responses



When asked about specific media companies, respondents estimated that only around 1/3 of the companies implement policies on telework or home office (see below). Among countries where unions/associations reported that no company implemented specific policies, we find Estonia, Kosovo, Portugal, Serbia and Montenegro. At the other end, among countries where unions/associations reported that most media implement policies, we find Cyprus, Finland, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Sweden and Turkey.

3.2. Does any media company from your country have any policy on Telework/home-office?

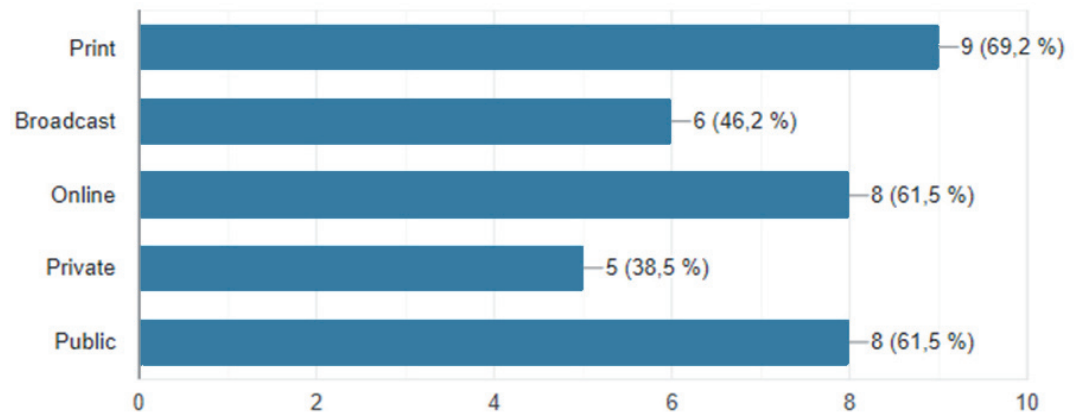
20 responses



The other chart, at the next page, indicates that policies or agreements exist mostly in print and public service media, in other terms the sectors including the major "traditional" media outlets.

3.2.2. In which sector of the media do they have policy/agreement?

13 responses



However, even in major public broadcaster such as the WDR in Germany, the union Ver.di has been trying to negotiate a specific agreement on home office for two years now, without success: *"After negotiations on mobile work had already failed to produce results from 2018 to April 2020, the WDR did not fundamentally change its positions in the negotiations on 21.07.2021. The employer does not want to know where the employees work and wants to call everything mobile work. Thus, the employees [working at home] are to bear the costs for ergonomic work equipment themselves, after all, aren't they supposed to earn enough? So the Workplace Ordinance is to apply to working days at the WDR, but not on home office days!"*¹⁶.

Some examples

In **Croatia**, the management of public broadcaster HRT had decided that employees working from home during, except for those who cannot for technical reasons, and who are therefore deployed in shifts. But they did not guarantee all the necessary working conditions for working from home, as well as an even distribution of work and fair wage.

In **Finland**, most media companies have their own policy or standard agreements. The biggest companies bargain their policy/telecommuting agreements with stewards/employees. Work equipment (adjustable chair, standing desk, additional monitor) is part of work safety and health, but the Finnish law does not obligate the employer directly to acquire the necessary work equipment. The Union of Journalists recommends reaching agreements with the employer to acquire (or reimburse) the work equipment and some employers do so.

In **Germany**, at the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*, the works council concluded an agreement on financial support for home offices for equipment and office furniture at home.

¹⁶ Source: <https://wdr.verdi.de/++file++60f820f0a294fba1b42d7700/download/WDR%20Tarifinfo%2013%20-%20mobile%20Arbeit.pdf>

In **Sweden**, *Dagens nyheter* (DN) organises check-ups on the physical layout of the home office, such as desks and chairs, and circulates surveys about their well-being. The company also has rules about meeting attendance.



Focus: new agreement on home office at French public broadcaster France Télévisions

Since March 2021, it is possible for each employee to request a „telework addendum” to their working contracts, subject to the agreement from their superiors. The major commitments of this agreement are:

- a voluntary basis: „the implementation of teleworking is the result of an employee’s choice”
- a commitment to maintain the current office space and not to introduce “flex office”: „teleworking will not have any consequences on the layout of the [newsroom] premises (...) France Télévisions does not link teleworking and reduction of the allocated offices”.

The management praised a way of organising work that would constitute a new form of freedom for employees. However, throughout the negotiations, which lasted several months, the union also pointed out risks and flaws:

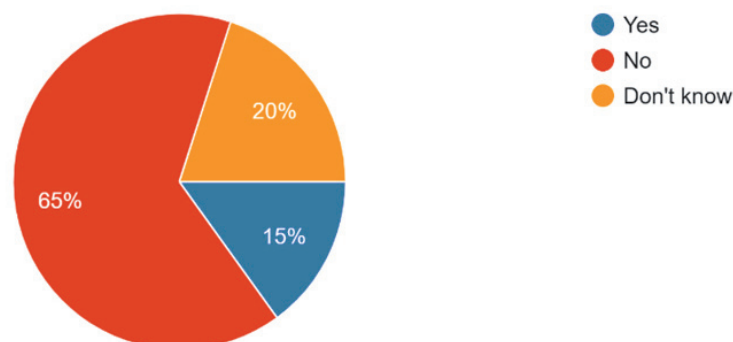
- After a refusal by the management of a request for teleworking by an employee, the remedies are insufficient. The unions were all worried about a possible arbitrary management of teleworking.
- The maximum number of days of teleworking (around 100 days per year) is higher than the recommendations of the union. For the SNJ, it was not necessary to exceed 2 days per week, or even less for part-time employees. In addition, the possibility of long periods, entirely in teleworking, is a risk factor for the health of employees and the cohesion of work groups.
- The amount of financial compensation (maximum € 240 per year) is too low. Even if it is capped by tax provisions, it would have been necessary to provide for additional compensation, linked to equipment purchases (ergonomic seat, etc.).
- The agreement foresees compulsory teleworking “in times of crisis”, whose definition is too vague.
- Finally, the SNJ asked that the negotiations include the search for alternative solutions to open-space newsrooms which are too noisy, stressful and tiring, and which are also a risk factor in the event of a pandemic. The management refused this specific request.

No financial support for journalists working from home

When asked if journalists receive financial support or compensation for telework or home office, a majority of them responded negatively. Only in Belgium, Germany and Sweden did journalists' unions/associations respond positively. Negative answers include Montenegro, Portugal, Croatia, North Macedonia, Denmark, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Luxembourg, Hungary, Cyprus, Malta, Finland and Serbia.

3.3.4. Do journalists get any financial support for telework/home-office? (e.g. using their private equipment, to compensate energy expenses, to get ...ipped with adapted furniture or material, other)

20 responses



When asked more precisely how health and safety issues are dealt with, a majority of respondents confirmed that provision of insurance for home-office/telework in case of accidents was respected.

The Turkish union of journalists (TGS) pointed out that according to law, "the employer is obliged to inform the employee about the occupational health and safety measures, to provide the necessary training, to provide health surveillance and to take the necessary occupational safety measures regarding the equipment provided, taking into account the nature of the work performed by the remote worker." However, according to Media Monitoring Reports written by the Media for Democracy/Democracy for Media Project (implemented by the Association of Journalists), in reality many journalists were not provided with adequate PPE (personal protection equipment) during and after the pandemic.

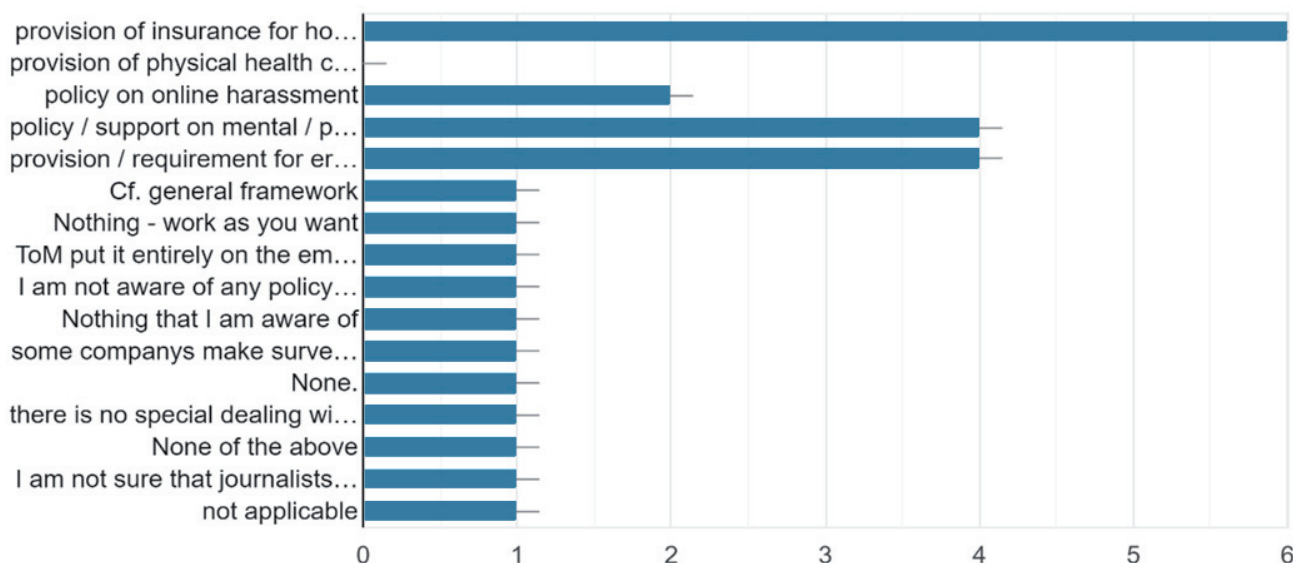
In Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands, unions/associations reported that provisions or requirements existed for ergonomic equipment.

In Hungary, the Union of Journalists reported that absolutely no health and safety measures were taken into account by employers in case of telework/home office. The same goes for Cyprus, Malta, Kosovo, Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro and Estonia.

On the sensitive issue of data protection and electronic surveillance, journalists' unions/associations reported receiving support in terms of training and material. Training is provided in North Macedonia, Serbia, Belgium, Portugal, and Montenegro. Material is provided in Luxembourg, Malta, Germany and Finland.

3.3.5. How are health and safety issues dealt with?

19 responses

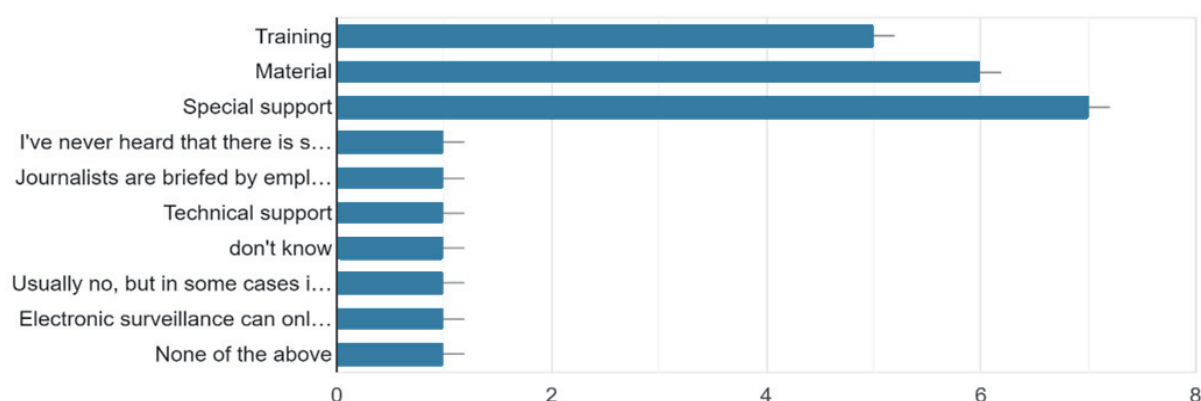


In Turkey, journalists are briefed by employers on data protection but there is no specific policy focusing on electronic surveillance even if this is not a major concern for media outlets, given the political pressure on journalists in the country.

In some countries this issue is not tackled at all, for example in Croatia and in Hungary.

3.3.3. How are data protection and electronic surveillance dealt with? Do journalists get support from the employer?

20 responses



PART 3

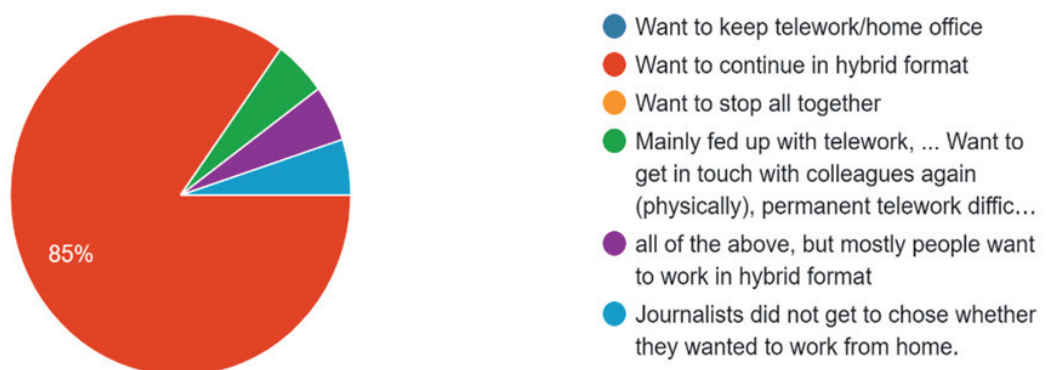
TELEWORKERS' PROTECTION AND TRADE UNION ORGANISING: THE FUTURE IS HYBRID!

Telework and home office was -or still is in some countries- compulsory because of the Covid-19 emergency measures. Almost two years after the outbreak in Europe, many employees still wish to continue, even after the pandemic, to work from home at least partially. Both workers and employers have gained experience with the pandemic but there are still many points to look into for social partners: *Is home office voluntary or compulsory? How can unions/associations stay in contact and reach out to journalists out of the newsroom? How will the key issues described in the previous parts be dealt with in a "hybrid world"?*

The figures from the survey are very clear about the intentions of journalists: a huge majority of them want to continue working in a hybrid format. The survey published in the UK in July 2021 also shows that "Looking to the future, most people favour the option to spend one, two or three days a week in the office, with the rest working from home"¹⁷. A specific comment came from the Journalists' association of Belgium (ABVV/AGJPB), estimating that journalists are "mainly fed up with telework [and] want to get in touch with colleagues again physically" and that "permanent telework is difficult for internal debate", which is not in contradiction with a potential evolution towards hybrid work with one or more days a week in the newsroom.

4.1. What are your members' opinion on telework/home office?

20 responses



¹⁷ "Beyond Lockdown - Does working from home work for you?"

<https://www.nuj.org.uk/resource/publishing-industry-survey-shines-a-light-on-working-from-home.html>

From these figures, as well as from general information in other sectors, it seems clear that telework and home office are here to stay -at least in a hybrid way, with a mix of days spent in the newsroom and others at home or remote. This is a real game-changer for working relationships, but also for trade union recruitment and organising, and of course for the collective bargaining among social partners.

The following parts of the survey look into these questions.

Reaching out to members digitally: e-mails still the most common tool

A huge majority of respondents declared that emails were still the most common tool to reach out to workers if they work from home and "traditional" newsletter.

In addition to these classical methods, unions/associations also developed other online communication: the Trade Union of Journalists of Croatia reported that they use closed groups on social media, in particular at public broadcaster HRT. The Belgian association also uses social media and several other unions/associations (Luxembourg, Turkey, Serbia and Germany) reported using specific software such as Zoom and Trello to organise online meetings and communication with members.

Interestingly enough, in countries where trade unions are well established, such as France, unions reported cases of service companies where employers forbid unions to communicate with their members via e-mails. This situation was brought to court.

Good practice from another sector

In April 2021, the German union IG-BCE and employers in the rubber industry reached an agreement confirming that trade unions have a legal right to recruit and contact teleworking employees. The agreement guarantees:

1. the possibility of publishing trade union information via company information systems (e.g. digital „notice board“ on the company intranet).
2. forwarding trade union information via company digital information systems (mailing lists).
3. access to or use of company video conferencing systems for trade union digital meetings (online consultation hour, online meeting).
4. access to or use of existing company communication channels for directly addressing and informing workers.

The list of digital access channels is not exhaustive. When new communication channels are made available within the company or when the possibilities are extended by technical developments, the agreement should be reviewed.

Telework raises many questions from journalists to their union/association

The pandemic was obviously the occasion for journalists to raise the issue of telework and home office with their union/association, even if the practice existed already before, at a smaller scale. To the question *"Has your organisation been receiving requests from journalists related to teleworking/home-office?"*, unions/associations provided very diverse feedback.

"We realised that teleworking was a big problem for some [journalists]" reported the Trade Union of Media of Montenegro (SMCG). The union in Cyprus reported that "the requests are mainly related to overtime work and work during holidays". In Croatia, "members were interested in what are the obligations of the employer in the case of working from home, whether the employer is obliged to provide equipment and pay additional costs. [The union] set these requirements, but there is no example that any employer has met them". In Portugal also, "the main reasons for requests from the union was the provision of IT equipment and communications from the company, and the right to disconnect". In Serbia, one of the topics was the conditionality of telework (compulsory or voluntary), when an "employer forced a journalist to work from home, she thought that she was discriminated against because only a few people were sent to work from home".

In Germany, questions were focusing on the practical matters such as "how to ask for financial support for computers and computer programs" and in Finland also journalists asked detailed questions such as *"what to pay attention to when negotiating telecommuting agreements, how employers should take care of ergonomics and home office (display, desktop, office chair) equipment and what are the conditions of accident insurance while teleworking"*.

In some countries such as Sweden, journalists are also asking *"questions about returning to the workplace"*.

Several countries (Estonia, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, North Macedonia and Kosovo) did not report any specific requests.



Good practice: in Turkey, a campaign launched by the journalists' union after Covid-19 doubled the number of collective agreements in media companies

Since the pandemic broke out, the Turkish union of journalists TGS has called all employers to implement teleworking to protect media workers. The union has called for adequate occupational health and safety measures, especially for reporters who have to work in the field. In March 2020, the union organised a **web page** to inform employees about their legal rights. In March 2021, the union published a **report** covering the impact of the pandemic and teleworking. Problems reported by employees were similar to other countries, such as an increase in their workloads at home, rise of unpaid overtime during teleworking, a decrease or cut of the lunch voucher payment and inadequate occupational health and safety measures both in workplaces and telework.

After publishing the report, the union announced a “**Telework Guideline**” which sets out key principles and conditions to ensure the decent working conditions of journalists.

1. Regulations on teleworking should be in line with **ILO standards**.
2. Teleworking should be organised on a **voluntary basis**.
3. There should be no **discrimination** among workers employed remotely or in the workplace regarding promotion, training, economic and social benefits.
4. Employers should guarantee **decent and fair working conditions** for remote workers.
5. Employers should show **respect for the collective rights** of remote workers.
6. **Working hours and breaking times** should clearly be determined within the limits of the law.
7. Employers should respect the “**right to disconnect**” regarding the working hours.
8. In case of **overtime working**, remote workers should continue to receive payment in line with the labour act.
9. Employers should support **adequate equipment** required for teleworking. Expenses related to teleworking (**electric, water, gas, mobile phone, internet bill** and so on) should be included in the agreement.
10. Employers should continue to take responsibility for **occupational health and safety measures** for remote workers.
11. Employers should respect the **right to privacy** for remote workers. They should limit the activities of the monitoring tools used for business purposes.
12. Employers should adequately inform remote workers about **cyber security** and provide them with relevant software before starting teleworking.

*This active approach was successful: before the pandemic broke out, TGS had only 7 **Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs)** in the sector: Reuters News Agency, Evrensel Newspaper, 9 Eylül Newspaper, Gazete Duvar, Bianet, Yön Radio and Refinitiv. Thanks to this campaign, the union has managed to gain the majority in 7 new media outlets (BBC, AFP, AP, Cumhuriyet, İz Gazete, Halk TV and Dokuz 8 Haber) from August 2020 until May 2021.*

An unclear future for journalists' organisations

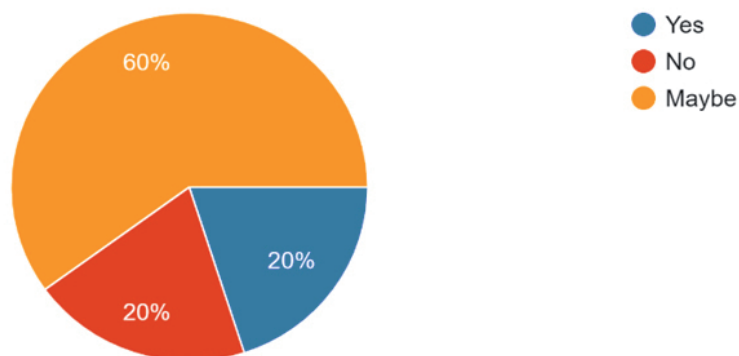
However, a majority of journalists' organisations are still unclear about their precise intentions for the future of telework / home office. Only 20% of them plan to work actively on the issue and for 60% of them, the question is still open.

Unions from Austria, Cyprus, Kosovo and Macedonia have the intention to deal more with telework and homeoffice in the future. The Trade Union of Media of Montenegro (SMCG) reported that they were "*trying to start negotiations on branch collective agreement in order to incorporate these norms in the media legislation and media scene*". In the case of Hungary, the Union of Journalists reported that "*there is no such willingness from the employers' side*" to open negotiations on that topic.

Four unions/associations (Belgium, Denmark, Malta and The Netherlands) declared that they do not have the intention to lobby for a right to work from home, however this might be for different reasons: in the case of Belgium, Denmark and The Netherlands, existing general regulations about telework may be considered already sufficient to cover the basic labour rights of journalists who wish to work from home, either on a permanent or on a temporary basis.

4.2. Does your union/association plan to lobby for a right to work from home?

20 responses



Good practice: Template agreements on telework in France

The French trade union CGT produced a template agreement on teleworking including the main aspects to negotiate, such as working time, remuneration, equipment, health & safety and right to disconnect. It also produced a series of webinars dedicated to negotiating telework agreements.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Covid-19 pandemic was an extraordinary catalyst and accelerator of the tendency of “mobile office” that appeared already years ago, which is becoming the new normal. The media sector will have to take into account the irreversibility of what has happened since the pandemic: full-time office work is likely to disappear, and the future work will be “hybrid”, with a mix of days spent at the newsroom and others spent at home or elsewhere as teleworkers.

This means that all the stakeholders (legislator, employers, unions/associations and individuals) will have to adapt and try to find a new balance, taking into account general principles such as equal rights and non-discrimination, respect of basic labour rights standards, communication and dialogue. Concerning more specifically trade unions, they will have to listen even more to the expectations of their members, and maybe they will also have to develop new forms of organising.

Looking at recent developments, and listening to what journalists and their unions/associations have to say, a certain number of **key principles** of telework / home office can be:

- Voluntary nature: telework / home office must be voluntary for both workers and employers and subject to an agreement
- Reversibility: a person who teleworks for a certain time must be able to return to work in person, and vice-versa.
- Non-discrimination: no distinction should be made between office workers and teleworkers. The employer must provide work equipment and cover the expenses that the worker incurs when working from home. Employers are responsible for investing in technology and training, as well as for health and safety measures.
- Equal rights: trade unions/associations must be able to contact and organise all workers, independently from their actual workplace.
- Right to disconnect: the right to digital disconnection must be guaranteed either by law or by “soft” regulations such as collective agreements.

In addition to these general principles, the following recommendations can also be identified.

Tips for journalists

- Know your rights. Don't assume that home office or telework is not regulated. Contact your union/association and exchange information with your colleagues if needed.
- In the absence of a regulatory framework or collective agreements, define an agreement about home office / telework with your employer, in your working contract. Contact your union if you need help.
- Set a schedule and set your limits. Your home is not your office. Don't spend all day at the desk. Go outside, take breaks and plan them if needed.
- Set a defined workspace. Be aware of the ergonomic issues.
- Reach out to your colleagues or talk to your manager if you feel isolated.
- You have the right to disconnect!

Tips for unions/associations

- Build a national legal framework that clearly defines telework and home office
- Strengthen collective agreements to ensure that telework legislation is applied equally to all staff and freelancers
- Guarantee the right to disconnect if it is not enforced - help journalists to establish clear boundaries between working hours and private life to provide a non-intrusive remote working environment, limit working hours
- Anticipate challenges linked to telework and offer assistance: equal rights, working time, work life balance, data protection, cyber security etc.
- Guarantee the right to organise electronically and develop specific agreements on this matter with employers
- Develop digital tools for a better communication with members and for trade union organising
- Develop "template agreements" dealing specifically with telework/home office
- Reach out to members

Tips for employers

- Well-managed telework policy can increase productivity and trust
- Take responsibility for your employees also when they are not in the news-room or at the usual workplace: health and safety, privacy, work life balance.
- Provide equipment - internet access, computers and other personal electronic devices, software. If not: it is also your responsibility to cover extra related costs.
- Be clear and precise about communication with the employees, as well as with deadlines and work schedules.
- Trust your employees: a good journalist is a good journalist anywhere, you don't need to monitor them in their daily routine.
- Be open to dialogue and negotiations about new forms of working relations.

ANNEX 1

COPY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE¹⁸

Telework/Home-office policy for journalists

Teleworking and working from home has become part of many people's reality, especially in the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. Journalists are also among those who have to adapt to these new ways of working in their everyday lives.

So what challenges and positive impacts could this have on journalists and their unions and association? What will the future of work be like for journalists? The EFJ is launching this survey to find out about best practices.

These questions are aimed for member organisations of the EFJ to gain an overview on how journalists and our member's countries deal with telework and home office.

*Obligatoire

1. Information about your union/association

1. 1.1. Name of your union/association *

2. 1.2. Country *

3. 1.3. Contact information (email address) *

2. General information about teleworking/home-office in your country

4. 2.1. What is the estimated proportion of journalists in your country working from home since the pandemic?

Une seule réponse possible.

- ☐ Less than a third
- ☐ 1/3
- ☐ 2/3
- ☐ More than 2/3

¹⁸ <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1LaNphSTigIEzcBB66UWzNqOI0vFqofreU-Pc7oZUAY4/edit?ts=60d4579c>

-
5. 2.2. Are there any state regulations and laws dealing with working from home / teleworking in your country?

Une seule réponse possible.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

6. 2.3. If yes, do these general regulations include a specific support payment/remuneration for telework/home-office? Please elaborate.

3. Information about telework/home-office

7. 3.1. Does your country have any legal provision/framework on telework/home-office?

Une seule réponse possible.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

8. 3.2. Does any media company from your country have any policy on Telework/home-office?

Une seule réponse possible.

- ☐ Yes, most media companies have such policies *Passer à la question 9*
- ☐ Yes, but only a few media companies have such policies *Passer à la question 9*
- ☐ No *Passer à la question 12*
- ☐ Don't know

Please briefly describe such policies:

-
9. 3.2.1. What is the estimated percentage of the whole media sector with such policy/collective agreement provision on telework/home-office?

Une seule réponse possible.

- ☐ < 25%
- ☐ 25-50%
- ☐ 51-75%
- ☐ > 75%

10. 3.2.2. In which sector of the media do they have policy/agreement?

Plusieurs réponses possibles.

- ☐ Print
- ☐ Broadcast
- ☐ Online
- ☐ Private
- ☐ Public

Autre : ☐ _____

11. 3.2.3. Please give an example(s) of media company/companies: Their names and how they regulate working in home office/teleworking?

3.3. If applicable, please provide specific information regarding telework/home-office

12. 3.3.1. Is telework voluntary?

Une seule réponse possible.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

13. 3.3.2. Is there an equal pay and treatment policy for people working from home/telework?

Une seule réponse possible.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
-

-
14. 3.3.3. How are data protection and electronic surveillance dealt with? Do journalists get support from the employer?

Plusieurs réponses possibles.

- ☐ Training
☐ Material
☐ Special support

Autre : ☐ _____

15. 3.3.4. Do journalists get any financial support for telework/home-office? (e.g. using their private equipment, to compensate energy expenses, to get equipped with adapted furniture or material, other)

Une seule réponse possible.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

16. 3.3.5. How are health and safety issues dealt with?

Plusieurs réponses possibles.

- ☐ provision of insurance for home-office/telework in case of accident
☐ provision of physical health check
☐ policy on online harassment
☐ policy / support on mental / psychological health
☐ provision / requirement for ergonomic equipment

Autre : ☐ _____

17. 3.3.6. Do workers have a “right to disconnect” outside of the normal working hours?

Une seule réponse possible.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

3.4. Telework/home-office and trade union organising

-
18. 3.4.1. How does your union/association (or its branches/chapels/representatives) reach out to workers if they work from home?

19. 3.4.2. Do you have any collective bargaining / agreements provision on working from home/teleworking? If so, please specify:

20. 3.4.3. Has your organisation been receiving requests from journalists related to teleworking/home-office? If so, what are these requests?

4. The future of telework/home-office or hybrid office

21. 4.1. What are your members' opinion on telework/home office?

Une seule réponse possible.

☐ Want to keep telework/home office

☐ Want to continue in hybrid format

☐ Want to stop all together

☐ Autre : _____

22. 4.2. Does your union/association plan to lobby for a right to work from home?

Une seule réponse possible.

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Maybe

5. Working at home: testimonies

Could you please ask some of your individual members (two journalists, ideally one man and one woman // one freelance and one staff journalists) to provide feedback on the following questions? In case your union already has information on these points, please answer them directly.

- 5.1. What are the advantages / disadvantages of working at home?
- 5.2. How do you evaluate the impact on your work as a journalist? (relations with colleagues, contact with sources, general investigative work)
- 5.3. Do you work more / longer since you are working from home?
- 5.4. How did the work/life/family balance change?
- 5.5. Does your employer provide you with suitable furnishing: ergonomic office chair, desk, separate room?
- 5.6. Does your employer provide you with the adequate electronic equipment (computer, phone, software)?
- 5.7. Does your employer provide you with training on telework/home-office communications tools?
- 5.8. Mental/psychological health: Does working from home impact your mental/psychological health? (It has a positive impact. It has no impact. It has a negative impact)
- 5.9. Please explain here: In case of an accident, are you covered by your work insurance while working from home?

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Google Forms

ANNEX 2

LIST OF RESPONDENTS BY COUNTRY

GPA	Austria
Flemish / Belgian Association of Journalists	Belgium
Trade union of Croatian Journalists	Croatia
Union of Cyprus Journalists	Cyprus
The Danish Journalists Association	Denmark
DJV Germany	Germany
Estonian Association of Journalists	Estonia
The Union of Journalists in Finland	Finland
Sajtószakszervezet, Hungarian Press Union	Hungary
Association of Journalists of Kosovo	Kosovo
Association luxembourgeoise des journalistes professionnel-le-s	Luxembourg
Independent Trade Union of Journalists and Media Workers	Macedonia
Institute of Maltese Journalists	Malta
Trade Union of Media of Montenegro (SMCG)	Montenegro
NVJ	The Netherlands
Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM)	North Macedonia
Sindicato dos Jornalistas	Portugal
Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia	Serbia
Swedish union for journalists (Journalistförbundet)	Sweden
Gazeteciler Cemiyeti/Association of Journalists	Turkey