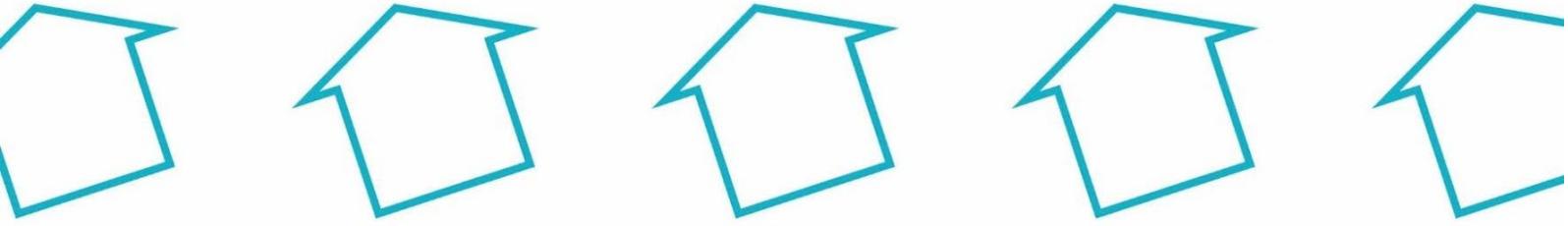
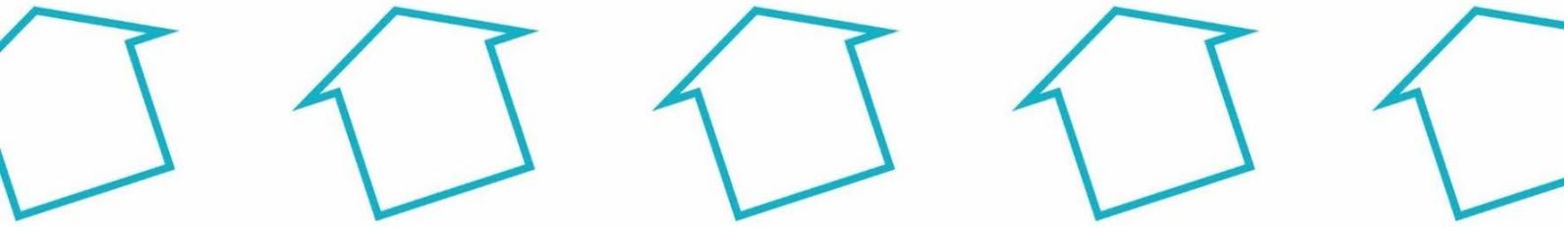




Corporate digital transformation for remote working

Current Status Review Report Summary



Summary of Results

Results category C1: Situation of Remote work before the COVID-19 crisis:

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought important changes in the way that companies work. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, companies had to adjust and adapt quickly to the new situation within a very limited period of time. Some mentioned that this change had to be accomplished within a couple of days. Companies had to provide employees with the respected equipment and coordinate the daily routine and assignments while not being able to communicate directly and in person.

Companies that traditionally resisted using new technologies and online tools or had no experience with remote working were the ones that had the biggest difficulty and needed more time to adjust and adapt to the new situation. On the contrary, companies that were previously familiar with remote working due to the nature of their work and/or were already using new technologies/digital tools were able to adapt quickly and easily to the new conditions and resume their work. Companies with international teams could continue work because remote work was part of their everyday working life.

In some cases, however, it is remarkable that even big companies faced difficulty in switching to remote work as they were unprepared for such a sudden change. This was also due to a lack of a preassessment.

This change was also very sudden for the employees who needed time to adjust their work and start working remotely in an efficient way. Remote working was a big challenge, especially for employees with low digital skills, who weren't familiar with even the basic digital tools, let alone the new tools employed. This was particularly evident in small companies.

The technical prerequisites (laptops, company cell phones, etc.) were often in place in the companies before COVID-19. However, some employees did not have company PCs.

Results category C2: Situation of Remote work during the COVID-19 crisis

The situation in companies during the COVID-19 crisis varied. At the beginning of the pandemic, a rapid transition to remote work had to be accomplished. Not all companies were equipped with the necessary hardware and software. Additionally, not all employees were familiar with the new software programs. In some cases,

deficiencies in IT support in companies were also identified. The necessary prerequisites for remote work (laptops, company cell phones) had to be realized. Furthermore, it was observed that communication had to change during this time in order to be able to communicate the intended goals to all employees. So, communication and coordination were especially hard to handle. During the crisis the need for remote working training tools emerged. Within the companies' processes, workflows, and task assignment needed adaptations. Externally the challenge to maintain customers communication channels appeared.

Employee satisfaction decreased continuously as the pandemic progressed. One reason for this was that it was difficult to separate work from everyday life. The existing situation also created opportunities, for example, learning to better exploit the potential of existing programs in companies. In addition to the mood of the employees, creativity in online team meetings also suffered. Another point of friction was between the employees who worked in the office and the remote workers. Communication in hybrid meetings also became difficult. As a solution, one company developed a guide for hybrid working for managers and employees.

Two years after the pandemic outburst it is considered that many companies are now sufficiently familiar with using digital tools and working remotely, even the ones that didn't use technology in their work before the pandemic and had difficulty adjusting at the beginning.

Results category C3: Changes in Remote Work, learnings and experiences with Remote Work

The impact, changes and experiences of the crisis on remote work are diverse. The positive aspects range from the higher performance of remote work to the increased employer attractiveness, to new opportunities regarding online training programs which leads to learning opportunities for the company employees. Furthermore, untapped potentials of programs could be exploited. In addition, remote work provides employees with more free time, as commuting has been eliminated for many of them. Another positive aspect is the expansion of the labor market, especially for companies with English as the working language. Among the negative aspects of remote work are the increased difficulties of communication, the lack of personal contact and the difficult separation between work and everyday life. Other lessons learned from the crisis are that some remote workers do not like to work from home, but rather in co-working spaces or in a coffee house. Furthermore, there was a clear consensus that hybrid working has a future and will become a demand of future applicants. In addition, there must be a clear new approach to the design of workplaces and working hours for remote work.

The pandemic period has shown that employees, being now familiar with the use of digital tools, can work effectively from home as they do from the office and be equally productive. They are more flexible to organize their time and they also save time commuting to work. However, the combination of remote working and working from the office is the optimal solution, as it allows employees to be flexible and organize their time better, while at the same time this can also benefit the companies, as well, by reducing costs.

Results category C4: Challenges or Barriers for Remote Work

The main challenge identified for remote working is the long term, continuous remote working, along with the lack of communication and socialization with colleagues. Interactions with clients were also disturbed due to COVID-19 for many companies. Another obstacle for remote working was the feeling of isolation but also the uneven role distribution between men and women regarding the upbringing of children, housekeeping and working at the same time from home.

Other challenges and barriers were the low availability of devices at the beginning of the pandemic, the difficulty in using some of the software employed for remote working and the limited knowledge of their use by employees.

The number and duration of online meetings caused high stress as well as more working hours. Aside the difficulties in communication and teamwork, a lack of creativity was mentioned as well as a lack of trust of the management in the employees. Furthermore, the attention of participants suffers during online training and meetings. It is also noteworthy that there are some professions that can't work remotely due to the type of their work or parts of their work.

Further risks in the new digital scenario were seen in security issues and potential exposure to cybercrime, understanding data protection rules and their limits and rights or licenses to use software.

Results category C5: Impact of Remote Work for employees

In some cases, the new situation created by the pandemic and the digitalization of work offered the opportunity for employment of new staff to cover the increased workload, e.g. in the cases of IT service providers. It also offered business development opportunities for some companies by developing new training programs and starting new projects to address the new needs and challenges.

Additionally, for the use of the new digital tools and methods, training was offered to employees, especially to key persons who would, in turn, train their colleagues. In

some cases, training was offered to employees even on the use of basic tools such as word, excel etc.

In some cases, training was not provided across the board during the Covid-19 crisis. The required skills acquisition was achieved either through mutual support among colleagues or by bringing in external specialists. In some cases, additional IT specialists were also hired to deal with the new challenges.

Results category C6: Competences on using computer programs and PC software

There is a need for training to use various computer programs, for competence development for digital process design, and also to achieve standardized digital competencies. The extent of such training depends on the target group and is often better covered by internal training. New IT tools or software demand specific and sound training. Some of the participants expressed their worries about the difficulties they face while communicating via Zoom, Webex etc.

Competences	Mean Value (Rating: 1 – 5)
Microsoft Office program (e.g. Word, Excel, PowerPoint)	3,5
Email communication programs (e.g. Outlook)	3,32
Programs for video conferencing (e.g. MS-Teams, Zoom, WebEx)	3,76
Programs for surfing the Internet / Browser (e.g. Edge, Firefox, Chrome)	3
	3,74

Programs for online collaboration for online workshops (e.g. Miro, Mural, Google docs)	
Programs for online project management (e.g. Trello, Asana)	3,71
Programs for planning corporate resources , i.e. human resources or materials (e.g. SAP, Microsoft Dynamics)	3,62
Programs for editing text files (e.g. Text Editor, Notepad)	3
Programs for developing software (e.g. Visual Studio, Webstorm, Android Studio, Xcode)	3,02
Programs for automating tasks , i.e. small software programs or formulas (e.g. macros, scripts)	3,6
File-sharing programs (e.g. OneDrive, Google Drive)	3,88
Overall Mean Value of 1st competences block	3,47

Results category C7: Competences on future job duties

A general need for training on future tasks such as agile and flexible working and on basic legal knowledge has been identified. Openness to technology combined with

flexibility and an entrepreneurial attitude are essential to maximize opportunities in the new digital scenario.

Agile, flexible working and the ability to react quickly to changes in the environment	4,07
Entrepreneurial thinking , i.e. quickly recognizing market opportunities and implementing them successfully	3,81
Self-organization , i.e. the ability of an individual to decide how to perform tasks in line with the company's objectives	4,14
Teamwork , i.e. the ability to work well together in teams	4,02
Networking , i.e. the ability to network well with others and promote exchange of ideas	4,05
Sustainable, ecological action , i.e. the observance of ecological, sustainable aspects in the work	3,79
Innovation , i.e. the ability to develop ideas and implement them successfully	4,05
Basic legal knowledge to get an overview of legal requirements, e.g. data protection, labor law, etc.	4,3
Overall Mean Value of 2nd competences block	4,03

Results category C8: Competences on current job duties

A need for training in self-organization for better separation of work and leisure time, dealing with stress, manners and netiquette, self-management, work-life balance and crisis management of executives is considered important. Especially work-life-balance and time management skills were mentioned.

Work-life balance , i.e. maintaining a balance between work and private life	3,88
Manners , i.e. the ability to act politely and correctly in various situations	3,79
Time management , i.e. the ability to manage one's time well and to schedule activities accordingly	4,33
Self-management , i.e. the ability to plan and organize one's tasks well and efficiently	4,16
Crisis management i.e. to be able to deal efficiently and effectively with unexpected situations both on a professional and personal level	4,23
Goals achievement (i.e. ownership and decisiveness, prioritizing, coping with uncertainty)	4,21
Overall Mean Value of 3rd competences block	4,08

Results category C9: Competences on professional use of Social Media

Training in the area of general employee education on social media presence, the separation between private and professional use of social media are suggested. There is a consensus about the advantage of social media professional interactions which is based on relying on a company strategy and train the employees on basic concepts to facilitate this common approach. Furthermore, the definition of the time framework for the use of social media for the company was mentioned as a focal point.

Networking through social media (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Xing, Twitter...), i.e. networking with work colleagues, partners and other companies via different social media sites	3,51
Overview of social media , i.e. knowledge of which social media exist for which requirements	3,42
Creating your own profile on social media , i.e. the ability to create your own or a company's profile on different social media sites	3,19
Overall Mean Value of 4th competences block	3,37

Results category C10: Competences on the safe use of computers and the internet

The need for training in the safe use of PCs and the Internet, especially in cybersecurity, is considered to be particularly important. The greatest need for training is seen in SMEs. The target group for such a training should be as many employees as possible within companies. It is important to develop a clear policy in the field of data protection and cyber security. This will translate into customer trust, especially regarding payments.

Safely browsing the Internet	4,36
	4,55

Secure handling of very important and sensitive applications (e.g. online banking)	
Secure handling of Email messages	4,3
Secure management of various access data and passwords	4,52
Secure handling of personal data such as names, addresses	4,36
Secure use of social media	4,36
Secure exchange of confidential files	4,7
Overall Mean Value of 5th competences block	4,45

Results category C11: Motivations for Remote Work trainings

To motivate employees to participate in training, the personal benefits for the individual should be emphasized. It should be highlighted how the skills learned will help them in their day-to-day work. The training subject should be direct applicable to the trainees' daily work. An evaluation of the training is recommended to measure results and effectiveness. Furthermore, shorter training units are recommended, as they address employees better and increase attention. Companies should organize the trainings in the timeframe of usual working hours.

It was also noted that people seek training on soft skills (e.g. anxiety management) which will help them to cope with the changes in their working environment.

Results category C12: Learning formats for Remote Work

The way of training format depends on several factors. First and foremost, the topic of the training. Topics that require pure knowledge transfer to the participants are recommended in shorter units of 60-90 minutes. In this case, online training with a strong focus on content is suggested. Furthermore, the duration of trainings depends on the goal. For knowledge transfer goals shorter units are recommended. If behavioral changes of the participants are the goal, longer units have to be considered. Full-day trainings are not desired by employees, instead half-day trainings are preferred. Furthermore, a combination of online and face-to-face units is suggested.

Concerning synchronous and asynchronous trainings there is a different view among the partner countries: A combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning, depending on the objective and content, is seen in Austria, in Cyprus synchronous online training with a short duration and the use of interactive tools is recommended, in Spain asynchronous training is preferred for practical reasons whereas in Greece both options are favored equally.