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DRAFT TOOLKIT ON TELEWORKING IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

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1. Introduction

1.1 Who is this Toolkit for?

2020 has seen unprecedented upheavals in many sectors around the world. The global pandemic has impacted practically every sector, including the work of public administrations. Local, regional and central governments had to face challenges in fighting infection rates, alternating between lockdowns and easing restrictions, schools closures and protecting the health of their employees and all citizens. Ensuring the continuity of service delivery and public administration meant that many authorities have, for the first time, experimented with teleworking. One of the aspects of the pandemic is that a lot of the effects will continue to linger on, even after the public health crisis is over. Developments in digitalisation, citizens' and employees' expectations in how they access services will have been changed for good.

It is based on these developments, as well as on the specific request by members of the CDDG, that the Council of Europe Centre of Expertise for Good Governance has developed this Toolkit to support central, regional and local governments in developing and implementing successful telework programmes. The main objective of the Toolkit is to explore in a very practical way, how public authorities at all levels of government can implement teleworking arrangements for civil servants, given both the particular challenges faced by public sector entities and the growing financial, human resources and political incentives to allow at least a portion of public employees to work remotely.

The Toolkit is designed to facilitate decision making on the different aspects of teleworking within public administrations and create a clear roadmap as to what needs to be considered, what steps have to be taken, all steeped in research and international good practice.

Before the writing of this Toolkit, a survey was launched to members of the CDDG, which gathered over 250 responses from various levels of government in Council of Europe member States. In large part, the Toolkit is based on the questions that were raised in the survey, as well as the challenges that were identified by the respondents with the implementation of teleworking in their entities. A number of targeted interviews were also conducted to gain an even more nuanced understanding of the difficulties faced by public authorities and also the opportunities for them in implementing new ways of working. The development of the Toolkit also included a comprehensive review of the most relevant and recent research and studies on teleworking in the public sector.

The Toolkit can be used by all levels of public administrations and is designed to support HR managers, senior management, line managers and trade unions in designing and rolling out teleworking for their employees.

1.2 How to use this Toolkit?

Even if a number of public administrations have implemented teleworking prior or during the global pandemic in 2020, they may not have had the time or all the information and necessary resources available to ensure that the transformational benefits of teleworking can be harvested for employees, the authorities and even citizens. Public administrations need to be prepared to manage this shift to a new way of working, which will impact not only the place of work for employees but also how the employees are managed, how the administration organises work and how services are delivered.

Public authorities will find this Toolkit useful if they are looking for information on introducing and implementing teleworking within their organisations. In addition, the Toolkit includes sections on the key success factors to teleworking, how to evaluate and review telework policies, as well as a number of templates and resources.

The objective of the Toolkit is to give the readers very concrete tools and steps to take in order to ensure that the transition from a more traditional form of working to a new way of working and delivering public services, which also includes telework, is successful.

Box 1: Terminologies

Telework is defined as the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs), such as smartphones, tablets, laptops, and desktop computers, for work that is performed outside the employer's premises (Eurofound and ILO, 2017). In other words, telework implies work achieved with the help of ICTs and conducted outside the employer's locations (ILO, 2020).

Teleworking may be defined differently by different administrations. It is often referred to as **remote working** or **telecommuting** (Vries et al., 2019). Teleworking may be an ad-hoc arrangement, a regular agreement on a fixed day/week, or an agreement stipulating up to how many days per week this is possible. Telework is subject to a regulatory framework in most of the EU Member States (Visser and Ramos Martin, 2008).

There are different types of teleworking, such as **working from home** where work responsibilities are carried out from home, using ICTs, or, **teleworking from remote offices** where the work is done at offices that are remote from the main office, such as satellite offices.

Flexible working arrangements mean the possibility for workers to adjust their working patterns, including through the use of remote working arrangements, flexible working schedules or reduced working hours (Eurofound, 2020a). They are the most commonly found alternative work arrangements in the public sector.

1.3 Debunking the myths of teleworking for the public sector

One of the most frequently referred to myths about teleworking in the public sector is that it is very different from teleworking in the private sector, due to the nature of the work of public administrations, in particular with regards to the service delivery to citizens. Certainly, there are a number of constraints in the public sector with regards to the face-to-face contact with citizens, nevertheless, these types of jobs also exist in the private sector. Not all roles lend themselves to teleworking in either of the sectors. The main difference, however, is perhaps in the approach to teleworking in the sense that civil servants are paid for by the taxpayers to work for the interest of citizens, and teleworking may still be perceived as a luxury or a privilege, or an opportunity to slack off, and this would not be well regarded by the public. This notion, however, has little to do with the actual issues around teleworking, but more with a flawed perception of what teleworking is. As more and more employees in the private sector, who are also citizens and public service users recognise and experience the benefits of teleworking, they will be less sceptical or judgemental about this working arrangement for public servants.

Especially the mandated teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic has shifted massively the public perception of teleworking, by managers and employees of the private and the public sectors, as it played a very important role in fighting the transmission of the virus.

There are also concerns about other aspects of teleworking that are perceived to be more challenging to be implemented in the public sector, for instance with regards to data protection, access to records, over-dependence on paper-based forms or fraud. These concerns are very valid and important and have to be taken into account, nevertheless, they should not stop a local, regional or national government department from implementing teleworking.

Teleworking is becoming increasingly mainstream and less as an exceptional form of work. There is now a lot more support available for providing teleworking to employees, at least on a part-time basis by International Social and Labour Institutions, the European Institutions, Occupational Health and Safety bodies, which is a sure sign that teleworking is a viable and accepted option for many organisations.

The Toolkit, building on previous work, and taking into consideration the prior experience of the Council of Europe members with teleworking, aims to take the available knowledge even further and offer very practical resources and recommendations to public administrations on how to get started with teleworking or take their teleworking practice to the next level.

2. Introducing teleworking at your organisation

2.1 What are the benefits and risks of teleworking in the public sector

2.1.1 Understanding the potential benefits of teleworking

Self-assessment questions:

- Has there been any form of identification at your entity with regards to the potential benefits of teleworking?
- What are some of the real or perceived benefits associated with teleworking, and how have they been identified?
- How would your organisation measure the real benefits of teleworking over time?

Why is it important?

Teleworking in the public sector has many well-documented benefits to employees, organisations and the environment (Day and Burbach, 2011). If practised correctly, coupled with a range of available resources such as training and appropriate technology, it can be a very effective work arrangement tool. The potential benefits of teleworking may include employee retention and cost savings, a higher level of flexibility and work-life balance, improved productivity, environmental friendliness, higher employee satisfaction, fewer work disruptions, resilience and emergency preparedness. It is also reported that a distributed workforce, with the use of teleworking, could also see better integration of policy functions in regional offices (Robbins, 2020).

What has been made clear during the global pandemic, is that government and public service cannot shut down like the private sector, there is an enhanced responsibility to ensure business continuity. Telework provides an opportunity for the employees of public authorities at all levels to continue working, and by transferring some of the citizen services online also continue service delivery. This has proven to be working and effective during the pandemic, but will also be available for public administrations in case of extreme weather events like floods or snow, heatwaves or terrorist attacks.

Another benefit that has emerged in the months of the pandemic and mandated home-based working for public authorities, is that a well functioning and practised teleworking programme can provide geographic and infrastructure independence to government operations. Employees can continue working from home, and be distributed away from the big city hubs or city centres and continue performing essential functions should a natural disaster or major incident make their primary place of work inaccessible. Over the longer term, this may lead to the development of public sector employees working from more rural areas, and thus strengthen and develop the economy in less-populated areas. Having the opportunity to work remotely will help government bodies compete with the private sector in recruiting and

retaining talent, contributes to reduced commuting, improved air quality and a better distribution of economic opportunities for employees and the community.

Understanding and measuring the benefits of teleworking over time could enable public organisations and local governments to take key decisions based on data and real employee and managerial experience, which may have an important impact on other aspects of the organisation (e.g. rent and office space, commuting, parking space, client service delivery, digitalisation...).

Telework will not suit every position and employee. Research (Eurofund and ILO, 2017) repeatedly indicates that the most effective teleworking arrangements are half-time and based on a voluntary approach. Telework will not fit all life situations, neither will be able to deliver fully on its benefits to employees at smaller municipalities where resources might be scarce. Thus, the key is to tailor teleworking arrangements to the needs of each individual. For teleworking to deliver on its benefits it must be offered as a free choice to employees, with clear information on how, and under what circumstances, teleworkers can go back to full-time office work.

What are the key actions to consider?

- Design and run an employee survey asking workers about their main motivations for wanting to work remotely, the frequency of remote work and their teleworking needs.
- Survey employees that have already worked from home or other locations about the benefits they experienced.
- Write up the benefits of teleworking for individuals, teams and the organisation, as well as for the broader community and schedule opportunities to communicate about them across the organisation.
- Whenever possible, find a key indicator that could measure the benefit. Ensure that you have access to the data and measure and report about it regularly (i.e. if the benefit of teleworking is reduced absenteeism rate in staff, then monitoring the number of sick days will be a good indicator for measuring and reporting on this benefit).

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- It is important to recognize that the potential benefits of teleworking can be highly situational, thus both the drivers and benefits of teleworking may vary at the level of regions, administrations, teams or even individuals. Thus, every teleworking initiative must be coupled with proper monitoring tools such as employee surveys or focus group discussions, data collection and analyses, with a specific focus on teleworking at performance conversations.
- The absence of a framework on teleworking (such as policies or procedures), and the lack of a supportive culture towards teleworking, may result in a low-level of take-up and lack of clarity on the teleworking framework and thus deprive the organisation of its benefits.

2.1.2 Assessing the potential risks of teleworking

Self-assessment questions:

- Has there been any form of risk assessment at your entity with regards to teleworking?
- What are some of the real or perceived risks associated with teleworking, and how have they been identified?
- How would the organisation mitigate the risks associated with teleworking?

Why is it important?

To have a balanced and realistic view on teleworking, in addition to the previously mentioned benefits that teleworking has to offer, the risks to its implementation also need to be taken into account. Teleworking is not at all a new concept for a number of municipalities and ministries. However, others might not have had any experience with teleworking prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and its related lockdowns. Studies have shown that the biggest risks of teleworking may include greater professional isolation, blurring of the boundaries between work and private life or an increased level of stress of teleworkers (Eurofound and ILO, 2017, Eurofound, 2020b). In addition, a short survey to the representatives of public administrations carried out for this Toolkit revealed other risk factors to the success of teleworking, namely management resistance, the nature of the work, lack of available technology, internet and other resources, and the culture of the organisation. It is fundamental for public administrations to be able to identify, as well as mitigate such risk factors to harness the full potential of teleworking. Assessing the risk factors of teleworking initiatives creates a complex challenge.

What are the key actions to consider?

- Establishing a formal teleworking scheme, with clear objectives and monitoring mechanisms, may address the underlying causes for resistance to teleworking, such as supervisors' fear of loss of control, or lack of trust as to whether teleworkers will remain productive while working remotely.
- Consider setting up test teleworking days, or pilot projects, with the participation of those employees whose role allows them to do so, and use the opportunity to survey or interview them to gather evidence about the potential risks.
- Appoint a task force to run a systematic risk assessment on all the aspects of teleworking that could potentially cause injury or harm to the teleworker, lessen their performance, blur their work-life boundaries even more or in general create a negative experience.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Leaving out important aspects of teleworking from the risk assessment, such as work organisation, managerial pressure, deadlines or overbearing monitoring by direct supervisors may skew the organisation's overall perception of teleworking. Besides other health and safety risks, these are also very important to take into account, as they are an integral part of any well-functioning telework program and can be addressed by line manager training.
- Employees working from home must have the same rights and infrastructure to carry out their work responsibilities as employees working at the premise of their employer. Relying on the personal IT equipment of the employee while working from home is an important risk factor, to performance, data security and mental health. Therefore, IT

and Security departments must be involved in the teleworking scheme from the beginning.

- For any risk assessment and preventative measure to work they need to be adopted to the specific circumstances of the organisation with consideration to its workplace culture, legal environment and other social factors, therefore copying the telework policy or practice from another organisation may add additional risks. Employers can use templates for designing the policy while adapting the details to the specific context, which may even vary among teams.
- It is key for organisations to bear in mind that mitigating one risk factor does not create a risk elsewhere. Therefore checking in regularly with teleworkers may reveal unintentional risk factors (i.e. musculoskeletal injury or pain from prolonged video conferencing, overwork or further blurring of work and private life boundaries).

Box 2: Risk assessment for teleworkers - OSHA Checklist and Risk Assessment

Developed by the European Agency for Safety and Health, this tool provides a brief introduction to teleworking in relation to occupational health and safety issues faced by teleworkers. The article includes a comprehensive Checklist along with information on how any organisation can run a risk assessment for teleworkers.

Link: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/e-fact-33-risk-assessment-teleworkers/view>

2.2 Building the Business Case for Teleworking

Self-assessment questions:

- Has there been any attempt to build a Business Case for teleworking at your organisation?
- Is there senior leadership support for teleworking at the organisation?
- Is there a budget allocated for teleworking related equipment purchasing and training?
- What is the perception of the public on using digital government services or teleworking in general?

Why is it important?

Teleworking needs to be an organisation-wide policy, that is recognised for its strategic role in contributing to a number of organisational objectives (for example, attracting talent or improving employee wellbeing or reducing the carbon footprint of the organisation), as opposed to an HR project. Moreover, teleworking needs to be based on the principles of transparency, equality and trust, and not refer to either a privilege only destined for some of the employees or a confidential time-limited agreement between an employee and the direct supervisor.

There is also a certain level of annual or recurring investment that is required for teleworking to be accessible and effective, with regards to technology, health and safety and training and skills-building. This investment, therefore, needs to be built into the annual budget of the organisation. Senior management usually does not have a lot of time to engage in

brainstorming and therefore need to be presented already with a concise argument, that not only includes the benefits, but also the risks, the mitigation of the risks and the costs, so that they can take an informed decision on the telework policy and programme in a considerably short time. The COVID-19 pandemic meant that a number of organisations have jumped into teleworking without a plan or a policy, and served as a test to address the benefits and the risks. Having a well-researched, concise and convincing Business Case can support HR departments and entire entities in winning leadership commitment and allocated resources to properly implement teleworking going forward.

What are the key actions to consider?

- Write the Business Case for Teleworking for your entity by listing all the potential (or measured) benefits, the real or perceived risks, how the risks will be mitigated, the results of a pilot or test teleworking experiment, as well as the investment required, and the return on the investment.
- Consider linking teleworking objectives with the strategic goals, priorities or work programmes of the organisation.
- Using the Business Case can help build support and momentum around a telework policy, and may convince senior management about the interest of the organisation to implement teleworking.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- A common mistake is exaggerating the benefits of teleworking and neglecting to mention the potential risks of teleworking in the Business Case, which is not only not giving a realistic picture of any teleworking initiative but also may raise suspicions in Senior leadership.
- Not having a transparent flow of information between departments may cause challenges in collecting data and information that is vital for a comprehensive, convincing Business Case (i.e. current absenteeism data, budget planning for IT tools for the next few years...).
- Writing an overly general Business Case about teleworking, without showing data and facts about the organisation itself is another common mistake, which only prolongs the advocacy phase, as senior management won't make any decisions based on general arguments.

2.3 The road to teleworking: policy and pilot programme

2.3.1 Drawing up a Telework Policy

Self-assessment questions:

- Is there a current Teleworking Policy at your organisation, or have there been any attempts at formulating one?
- In the absence of a Teleworking Policy, what other internal or external policies, regulations or practices may promote or hinder employees working from home?

- Who would be key internal stakeholders in drafting and implementing a Teleworking Policy at your organisation (HR department, staff representatives, the IT department, the OHS department, facilities, the legal department)?

Why is it important?

The development of a policy framework that governs and guides employees as well as supervisors in using teleworking initiatives is fundamental. Many public administrations may already have a degree of informal teleworking in place, by which employees may request from their direct supervisor, informally, the possibility to work from home to be able to either be home for a specific day or if they are working on a task that requires for them to be able to concentrate away from the noise or interruptions of a busy workplace. This may also work, however, some research (Troup and Rose, 2012) suggests that if there is a formal programme in place with a policy, application process, transparent criteria, training and written agreements, employees will be able to depend on that policy for better work-life balance as they will be able to organise their lives more effectively. A formal policy may also support managers through a more structured approach that can increase the participation and the chances of success.

Formulating a telework policy must rely on the shared understanding between the employer and the employee as to what is understood by teleworking, what are the conditions for practising it, who is eligible, what are the responsibilities and rights of teleworkers and how performance will be measured. This document needs to bring clarity and help embed teleworking into the organisational culture and the ways of working, not only be used as an exception under certain circumstances or as a reward or punishment at the discretion of management.

For the telework policy to be responding to the specific context, it needs to also consider the needs of the employees, the management and the organisation. To be successful, teleworking within public administrations needs to be legal, authorised, encouraged, monitored and rewarded. First, a thorough review of the legal framework must be carried out to ensure that the proposed telework policy and practice do not clash with existing legal provisions or social partner agreements as to where, when and how work can be performed for the public administration employees.

A clear and concise policy means that individuals and teams clearly understand their responsibilities and options, which again means saving time and resources, as employees won't spend their time trying to figure out their options or talking to different people in the organisation. Formal policies also contribute to a shared vocabulary around the policies and the programmes and contribute to trust and transparency as they clarify the processes and conditionalities. In addition, formal policies also reduce legal ambiguity and provide a certain degree of legal protection, which courts refer to as the "reasonable person standard".

What are the key actions to consider?

- Middle management is the key to implementing teleworking in any organisation or public administration. It is therefore recommended to involve them as early as possible in the process of designing a telework policy, by asking for their input, understanding their concerns and constraints and seeking their support. This may be done via a survey, targeted interviews or focus group discussions.

- What is your organisation's definition of teleworking? Is it only from the home of the employee, or also from other (third) locations, such as co-working spaces or satellite offices? Consider whether employees can telework full-time or only some of their working hours, and what places are eligible for teleworking, a narrow definition of home-based telework, or a broader definition of mobile teleworking.
- Make sure you take into consideration other policies that exist in your organisation around when and where work is performed, including policies on working time, leaves and flexible working arrangements, to ensure that there are no contradictions between them. Some organisations choose to make teleworking part of the flexible working policy.
- When formulating the section on the eligibility of employees to telework for the policy, there should be a specific reference to the types of jobs that are amenable to teleworking and clarifying what jobs are not suitable for teleworking full time or in parts. By applying work design principles, more jobs can be performed at least partially from home as organisations believe are suitable originally.
- The language and the specific words used for the telework policy should be gender-neutral, inclusive to all contract types, and ensure that teleworking is not framed as a reward or a special favour for employees, but is accessible for all and not specifically linked to past achievements and experience with teleworking.
- Depending on the practice within the teams or the nature of the work, there may be a team-level or departmental agreement about certain days on which teleworking is not possible and employees are expected to work on-site, or other rules about core-hours, during which teleworking employees must be reachable by the agreed means of communication. For instance, the team may agree that Mondays are the days for the staff-meetings when all team members are expected to be in the office.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Teleworking policies may overlap with other existing policies around health and safety, working time, workplace, leaves, data security, and not checking the telework policy against them may create contradictions.
- Not asking for feedback on the draft policy could lead to disengagement and low level of take-up for the policy and jeopardize its success. Without broad support for the policy and a good level take-up telework becomes a mere experiment - easily begun and easily abandoned and the likelihood that the expected benefits will be received is small.
- In large and dispersed organisations, such as public administrations or government departments, with a variety of job roles, it is recommended to gather input and feedback to the draft policy to prevent mismatches or even the failure of the policy. Therefore, policies need to be general enough to be applicable in all departments and offices.
- The telework policy should remain flexible enough to accommodate the diversity of office circumstances and the individual's needs. The policy shouldn't contain an answer to every possible scenario or be too cumbersome, but be clear and simple enough to provide and strengthen a shared understanding to all employees and management about what teleworking is and how it should work in the organisation.

Box 3: What sections are recommended to be included in a telework policy

Teleworking policies usually contain very similar sections across organisations. These are:

- Definition of Teleworking
- Objectives of Teleworking
- Eligibility criteria
- Application process and Approval process
- Telework Agreement template (Working hours, workspace and equipment requirements, duration, costs)
- The responsibilities of managers
- The responsibilities of teleworkers
- Review and Evaluation
- Performance management
- Modification or Termination
- Training and communication

2.3.2 Pilot programmes or test days

Self-assessment questions:

- Have parts of the organisation or the entire organisation worked remotely before?
- When teleworking, are the evaluation criteria in place, and have they been measured (e.g. via an employee survey)?
- Is there someone within your organisation who has experience with running pilot programmes or tests in the area of work organisation?

Why is it important?

Pilot or trial teleworking periods offer public administrations the opportunity to test teleworking on a smaller scale, with the most engaged and suitable departments and staff for a limited period of time. The pilot phase can last from 1 to 60 working days. The pilot phase effectively brings the telework policy to life and checks its feasibility and how appropriate it is to the specific context, and what may be missing from it or what may be overregulated. The trial gives the public administration the opportunity to revisit the policy and make necessary changes, as well as be made aware of potential factors that may be hindering the rolling out of teleworking on a larger scale, due to issues around technology, employee and managerial skills or the organisational culture. In addition, a pilot phase is especially valuable for any public administration that is still sitting on the fence about teleworking and flexible working, and a test can help support the decision around the future direction of teleworking.

A teleworking pilot is also an opportunity for employees to test their ability to successfully telework, as well as their own preference for working from home or another alternative location. Teleworking is not for everyone, and it certainly won't suit every position in the public administration sector. The pilot will be an opportunity to find all of this out, and more. Teleworking may be an option that some employees will use frequently, and other employees may only use occasionally and another group of staff will use very rarely, but everyone benefits from at least trying it out once or twice. The need for teleworking can arise very suddenly for

certain employees, due to an injury or illness, the care need for a family member or other type of emergency, for instance, public transport strike, climate events such as flood or snow, and having the option to teleworking, with at least having tried it once is of great value under such circumstances.

What are the key actions to consider?

- Ensure that both the Teleworking Policy and the Telework Agreement templates are at least in their draft form before the launch of the pilot.
- You may either launch an open call for volunteers to take part in the teleworking pilot or select certain departments on a strategic basis. If the organisation chooses to designate a specific team for the teleworking pilot, the latter, specific attention needs to be put on communication and justification to avoid an “us against them” situation, whereby the two groups (teleworking and not-teleworking) come into conflict or harbour feelings of jealousy towards one another.
- The conditions for participating in the teleworking pilot need to be clarified with regards to technology, role type, skills, deliverables...etc.
- To contribute to the success of the pilot programme you may consider supporting the teleworkers with relevant documentation on a variety of issues, such as memos, factsheet, protocols that could provide information about teleworking, its health and safety implications (ergonomics, stress, overwork), work-life balance etc.
- The line managers and team leaders participating in the teleworking trial should have a minimum level of skills and knowledge (employee monitoring tips, performance measures and standards, application process and approval criteria, telework agreement templates, management by objectives etc.) and confidence in managing a remote team, and if that is not the case, consider either briefing or training them on managerial good practice.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- One of the risks in launching a teleworking pilot is simply assuming that it will work, or that the experience of the participants will be positive. We know from research (Mann and Holdsworth, 2003) that even with the adequate policies, training and tools in place, some teleworkers are having a hard time. Public administrations, therefore, need to consider that the pilot will also need investment in the form of equipment, communication tools and even line-manager training, to maximise the chances of the pilot being successful.
- This is a critical moment in the change process for the public administration in the way work gets done. Champions of teleworking will want to ensure the success of the pilot period, but sceptics will hope for its failure, as it will lead the organisation to abandon the idea of teleworking. Hence, the trial should not be seen as a condition for teleworking as such, in a yes/no decision, but a trial of the modalities of teleworking, and what are its success factors. This will send a strong signal of encouragement to the champions and change agents and discourage employees who would perhaps like to see the pilot fail.
- It is not only the participating teams that need to be equipped with tools and recommendations on communication (for example, use of technology, frequency of connecting, meeting protocols such as the use of cameras, expected time for teleworkers to respond to emails etc.) but everyone in the organisation who will be interacting with the teleworking employees.

- Despite the time pressure, the teleworking trial should be postponed until all critical digital tools are in place for employees to be able to completely fulfil their work obligations, including secure remote access to all documents, document approval and digital signature capability.

Box 4: The typical phases of a Teleworking Pilot project

Phase 1: Planning phase (months 1 to 3)

- Obtain top-level management support
- Establish a cross-functional teleworking project team (HR, facilities, employees' representatives, legal and IT)
- Gather baseline data via employee surveys and data collection
- Establish measurable and realistic telework program goals (participation rate, employee satisfaction, productivity, the satisfaction of supervisors etc.) and decide on evaluation criteria
- Determine what resources will be required and have them ready by the beginning of the pilot (computers, cloud access, software subscriptions, skills training, available on-call IT support)
- Develop Teleworking Policy and the Telework Agreement templates

Phase 2: Implementation phase (months 4 to 6)

- Select participants or participating departments/municipalities
- Provide training/orientation for employees and managers
- Launch of the teleworking pilot
- Use internal communication tools to share information about the pilot, employee experiences and expectations to create a buzz and ensure transparency

Phase 3: Evaluation phase (months 6 to 7)

- Conduct post-implementation assessment (interviews, surveys, focus groups)
- Compile and analyse results, prepare reports/briefing materials
- Communicate results across the organisation
- Determine next steps (phased expansion or termination) and inform employees

2.4 Digitalisation and technology requirements

2.4.1 Ensure IT resources and literacy for civil servants

Self-assessment questions:

- Has the organisation considered to invest in additional laptops for employees or next time when it has to refresh the IT infrastructure purchase laptops for employees instead of desktop computers purchase laptops for employees?

Why is it important?

Enabling the employees of local, regional and national authorities to telework requires more than just purchasing equipment and providing a laptop computer for each staff member. The IT infrastructure for public administrations and local governments is complex and requires ongoing innovation, maintenance and training for users, which needs to be embedded in a long-term vision. This long-term vision must encompass investment into infrastructure, full migration to a cloud environment and changes in work practices and using digitalisation to rethink and modernise a number of aspects of the work that is being done by public administrations. Not only is this investment a question of budget or financial constraints but also a security issue. Teleworkers must be equipped with the right technology and be provided secure remote access.

Local, regional and national authorities need to take a proactive approach addressing often difficult questions regarding how the IT infrastructure and environment in place is enabling or hindering teleworking. As seen in 2020 during the pandemic, teleworking can or needs to be an important alternative for most or all employees of public administrations. In order to make this a reality, a number of key considerations must be taken into account in relation to digitalisation, new technologies and purchasing, for teleworking employees to have the tools necessary to perform their work. It is important that the chosen platforms and tools can both enhance the citizen experience and workforce productivity.

What are the key actions to consider?

- Even if the implementation of the telework policy is mainly in the hands of managers and the Human Resources department, the department responsible for IT and technology needs to play an active role in choosing technology solutions that will support the work of both office-based and teleworking employees.
- It is highly recommended that teleworkers are provided with the same standard products and configurations as employees working from the office and that they are compatible with the overall enterprise architecture, as well as being able to benefit efficiently from the centralised IT help desk.
- Any decision concerning technology refresh should take into account the consequences for supporting teleworking. For example, by replacing desktop computers with laptops, employees have greater flexibility in terms of work location.
- For employees in public administrations and local governments to be able to carry out their work in a way that maintains their performance and service delivery while teleworking, they need to have at least the following: a laptop or PC, applications software, wired or wireless high-speed network connectivity. Additional tools may include a printer and/or scanner, a headset, a microphone and a smartphone.
- Organisations may also take the decision to digitize their records in order to support the possibility of employees to work away from the main office or workplace. In some cases, it is permitted for employees to remove hard copy files from a central office location, which was also necessary during the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated lockdowns. Digitizing records can greatly help to reduce the barrier of teleworking in public administrations and local governments, as files can be quickly located and retrieved by computer, pictures enlarged for greater readability, the digital files take up less physical storage space and are less heavy or cumbersome for teleworkers to carry

home and bring back to the office, copies can be sent by e-mail to other departments or citizens.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- If the IT configuration or IT products for teleworkers (installed on laptops) are not compatible with the central IT architecture and infrastructure, or if employees working from home need to use their own computers, there may be a lot of incompatibility between the different tools, which not only leads to frustration and an increase of technostress for employees (Suh and Lee, 2017), as they need to figure out workarounds but reduces efficiency and increases the time spent on a task.
- The employee experience of teleworkers is greatly influenced by how easy it is to use the digital tools for work, how efficient they are and how fast their internet connection is. The lack of appropriate tools may not necessarily deter employees from working from home, but they slow down or impair their productivity significantly. Therefore not investing in reliable, user-friendly and compatible digital work tools is a common mistake that should be avoided.
- Similarly, local, regional and central authorities also need to examine how employees working from home will be able to work with legacy applications on their devices and internet connection, and whether these need to be moved to a web-based architecture to work. Not taking this into account contributes to hampering the transition to teleworking.
- By not taking a holistic view on the impact of digital equipment and tools, public administrations deprive themselves of a broader understanding of how these tools impact the work of the employees and service delivery, for instance by only focusing on their cost. Slow or sluggish IT tools or internet access causes irritation for teleworkers throughout the working day, which increases mental and physical health risks and reduces work engagement and individual and team performance.
- Cities and municipalities must ensure that teleworking employees have online access to the records. There may be a challenge, if the networks are capacity-limited, employees may not be able to access the servers simultaneously. The local government then may have to consider staggering work hours to ensure that every employee can get access to the records.

2.4.2 Tackling IT-related corruption and security risks

Self-assessment questions:

- Does your administration have a policy or standard protocol around data protection, data security and the prevention of data security breach? Has it been shared with employees?
- Has the Security department been involved in the preparation of the Teleworking related software and hardware purchase or configuration?
- Does the Teleworking agreement contain a section and a declaration by the supervisor and the employee that they are aware of and will comply with the organisation's policy related to information and data security?
- Have teleworkers been provided with mandatory training on how to protect confidential public information, as well as how to preserve public records?

- Have supervisors and the IT department made sure that any access to the records and sensitive information occurs via secure network access and the devices have the suitable level of security software and configurations?

Why is it important?

While the attention of public administrations and local government offices is focused on responding to the immediate needs of the citizens, they should recognize that there are real cybersecurity risks associated with their employees working away from the main work premises and potentially on their own private devices.

The same IT security and good digital citizenship practices are required at the designated workspace and tools of employees working from home as for those working in the primary workplace of the employer. Public administration and municipal employees often work with confidential and/or critical information, and teleworkers must exercise due diligence to ensure that public data and systems are protected, and not left available for intentional or inadvertent access by others (County of Santa Clara, 2015). Moreover, teleworking employees must follow all relevant regulations, internal policies and procedures including IT security, privacy and confidentiality policies and guidelines. Employees who work from home have to be trained to follow secure practices to protect confidential information and data, equipment and systems.

What are the key actions to consider?

- Central, regional and local authorities must be made aware of the realistic cybersecurity and corruption risks that exist for all employees handling confidential data, sensitive information on the systems and devices provided by the employer. However, it is important that being aware of these risks should not undermine teleworking programmes. Effective and regular training and communication exercises are needed to empower employees working from home to be aware and avoid or mitigate these risks.
- IT departments, in cooperation with HR and other services, such as the Security department, need to audit existing processes and ensure that they are up-dated for teleworking employees, with regards to the use of the personal electronic equipment of employees (computers, laptops and smartphones) or using the equipment of the employer in the home of the employee.
- Teleworkers need to be made aware that if they store information on their personal computers for their work, this will be subject to review of their employer with a view of requesting public records.
- Password threat is one of the more common risks of teleworking employees, therefore a two-factor authentication (2FA) for identity verification is highly recommended, which can use the mobile phone of employees to generate and display a one-time password for workers to log-in for the day.
- Another common IT solution for preventing cybersecurity risks for teleworking employees is choosing a VPN (virtual private network) gateway.
- As there are many different IT solutions out there, a good practice to select the most suitable one is to ask the service provider for an initial proof-of-concept (POC) performed in the real environment of the public administration, to demonstrate how the technology solutions are capable of supporting the entire operation to quickly enable secure remote working.

- In order to be able to face the increased risk of hacking and cyberattacks, which occurred during the pandemic, public authorities may consider developing a specific cybersecurity action guide for local, regional or national leaders, which outlines several steps they can take immediately to reduce the risk of disruption and public safety harm. This includes refreshing staff skills on cybersecurity policies and the importance of good cyber hygiene. The public authority may also want to review any cyber emergency response plans that depend on falling back on the use of paper documents and manual processes, as these may be impossible if the offices or the buildings are closed.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Cybersecurity is one of the most rapidly evolving branches of technology and digitalisation, where cybercriminals are always one step ahead. Generally, leaders and managers at public administrations are not well vested in new technologies and security risks, therefore they are extremely vulnerable to profiteering by IT solutions providers.
- When the central, regional or local authority opts for one or the other IT solution in order to prevent security breaches or corruption, during the tendering process it needs to be made clear to the bidding companies, that there will be a portion of the workforce that will work part-time from their homes or an alternative location. Not including this already at the initial tendering phase is a missed opportunity to ensure that whatever system is chosen is compatible with teleworking.
- The current or future IT solutions provider or the IT helpdesk needs to be given an overview of the entire teleworking population and footprint to enable rapid alerting and threat mitigation by IT staff.

Box 5: Internet and cybersecurity Dos and Don'ts

As parts or the entire workforce starts teleworking, below are a number of tips to help central, regional and local government leaders to navigate cybersecurity and establish good practices to prevent security incidents and corruption.

- DO clearly articulate the importance of always being aware of cybersecurity good practice and protocols. DO encourage vigilance for both employees working in the office and those working from home. DO make this a regular part of your areas to cover in management meetings and town halls.
- DO check in regularly with colleagues from a digital perspective, communicating that it is OK to be unsure on how to handle certain digital and cybersecurity issues and that there are available help and support from the IT helpdesk or support person.
- DO encourage a “see something, say something” approach to promoting security vigilance. This not only will prevent employees from trying to solve issues themselves for which they may not have the necessary skills and knowledge, but also enforce accountability.
- DO engage with IT solution providers or the IT team/department early in the process of introducing teleworking. Raise the question of cybersecurity at every purchasing decision (laptops, mobile phones...).

- DO train employees on the correct use of public records, even when working from home, reiterate that the same rules apply.
- DO inform employees that they should be using the devices issued by the public administration with the specific IT systems and applications.
- DON'T allow employees to use their personal email accounts, instant messaging, text messaging to conduct their work.
- DO empower employees to always bear in mind cybersecurity precautions when working from home, from password management to recognising dangerous links, malware, phishing and other scams.
- DO inform employees about their responsibilities to protect and secure government-issued equipment when not in use at home, and never lend it to others.

3. Managing teleworking

3.1 Administrative aspects of teleworking

Self-assessment questions:

- Have you prepared a Telework Agreement template?
- Is there clarity on the request mechanisms, how and in what form employees will be able to request teleworking and the process of managerial approval/denial?
- Have you clarified internally which roles and tasks are suitable for teleworking?
- How do your employees request regular or permanent telework?
- How do managers go about deciding whether to approve or deny that request?

Why is it important?

Managing teleworking employees means that there will be additional tasks and responsibilities for mid-level managers and direct supervisors, particularly in the early stages of introducing teleworking. A Teleworking Policy in itself is not enough, public administrations and government departments that have seen the most success with their teleworking programmes have clarified and put in place additional administrative and managerial procedures in support of a smooth implementation.

The practical implementation of the overall telework policy within local, regional and central authorities will be different for every team. Depending on their role within the organisation, the profile of the workers, whether there is direct contact to citizens, their tasks and security clearance, each team has a slightly different approach to teleworking. For some teams within public administration teleworking is practically impossible, whereas other teams could almost work from home on a permanent basis. It is up to the managers and the teams to apply and tailor the telework policy to their specific context.

What are the key actions to consider?

- Applicability: Managers and team leaders need to determine, which roles and tasks within their teams can be performed while teleworking. Certain positions or

responsibilities lend themselves easier to teleworking than others. Before determining whether a person can work from home or another location, public administrations, and in particular managers should review the duties and essential functions of each post. It is generally those roles that are most suitable for teleworking, where employees perform their work autonomously, with limited or no face-to-face interaction with citizens or service users, limited work performed on specialised equipment and very low level of security clearance required.

- Eligibility considerations: in addition to how suitable a role is for teleworking, managers and team leaders should consider which employees are eligible for teleworking. This may concern their contract type (full-time, part-time, interns, temporary contracts), or the seniority of employees (how many years have they worked at the organisation, as it is generally a good practice to start teleworking after having spent at least 6 months to 1 year with the organisation).
- Suitability of the home working environment: Managers, in cooperation with the occupational health professionals of the public administration, should also assure that the home working environment, where the employee will be teleworking, is suitable for delivering the same quality of work, as in the office. There may not be an opportunity to carry out a formal inspection of every home of every employee that will take part in the teleworking programme. But there are other ways in which the employer can be sure that the employee won't suffer any mental or physical health incidents or accidents while working from home, and also the work materials, equipment and information can be protected and preserved in good working order while at the teleworking location. Therefore, public administrations, managers and the occupational health professional or service may develop a number of tools that can support teleworkers and their managers, among other things self-assessment check-lists, ergonomics guidelines and check-lists, guidelines about personal, equipment and documentation safety or password protection. To support the teleworker, managers or the occupational health service may conduct an evaluation of the home work environment of the teleworker by means of a video camera and video call, together with the teleworker. Teleworkers who are handling expensive equipment while teleworking, or taking home sensitive or classified documentation or records may need to be equipped by the organisation with proper storage, shredding and other tools, which are otherwise absent from an average household. Therefore, employees may need to be provided with a fireproof or waterproof box or storage in case of fire or flooding, especially in areas prone to these natural disasters.
- Drawing up a Telework Agreement: In addition to the Telework Policy, public administrations should draw up a Telework Agreement, which is a very useful and practical tool to agree on the modalities of frequent or recurring teleworking of employees. The Agreement is concluded by the employee and the direct supervisor, and details, among others, the days on which the employee will work from home, the home work environment, the communication tools, equipment, tasks and reporting. It is important that the organisation clarifies, what is the difference between ad-hoc and regular teleworking, and only requires a Telework Agreement for employees who work from home on a regular or recurring basis, and that a Telework Agreement is not necessary for the occasional day of working from home, in case the employee needs to be at home for a valid reason. It is recommended that both the employee and the supervisor acknowledge the terms that are laid out for teleworking in the Agreement and sign it unless the supervisor does not grant the right to telework to the employee,

in which case the manager needs to justify this decision in writing in the Agreement. A sample Telework Agreement is provided in Annex II as a resource. Each local, regional and national public authority should develop its own Telework Agreement that includes the provisions that are specific to their Telework Policy.

- Assess whether the role or tasks are suitable for teleworking: Managers and team leaders at central or municipal administrations may need support in assessing whether the employee's role is suitable for teleworking. Organisations may therefore develop an assessment form that should contain questions to managers for them to be able to decide the feasibility of teleworking: are the position and its related tasks suitable for teleworking; is the employee well suited for teleworking; is the employee's home office a suitable place to work from; is that employee teleworking suitable for the team. A sample Telework Assessment Form can be found in Annex I. of the Toolkit as a resource.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- One of the most important pitfalls in the organisation is to underestimate the administrative effort that needs to accompany teleworking. A Telework Policy is not enough to ensure the effective day-to-day management of employees working from home. There are some steps that are unavoidable, for instance putting in place a Telework Agreement, clarifying the process for requesting teleworking and the process for approving or rejecting the request. Undoubtedly, managing teleworkers in addition to staff working in the office will initially increase the workload of managers.
- When processing requests for teleworking, managers need to bear in mind the interests and the goals of the organisation and the team primarily. Under no conditions should the service delivery suffer because an employee is teleworking. Therefore maintaining adequate office coverage by defining core hours and hours of coverage and staffing levels are key, and this needs to be reflected in team-level decisions on teleworking.
- Teleworking should not be viewed as a privilege or a gift a manager is giving to an employee and thus reflect favouritism, and neither should denial of a request be used as a punishment for an employee. Teleworking needs to be viewed in a neutral way, as a viable work organisation tool, and any decision on whether an employee can work from home or not should be very transparent and based on what impact it would have on the performance of the team and the experience of the citizens.
- Managers may also make the mistake of not considering the specific individual circumstances of employees. There may be a number of factors that come into play for an employee to make the request to work remotely, including the length of their commute, the cost of their commute, the nature of their work, disabilities and mental health issues or particular family situations or caregiving responsibilities.

3.2 Managing teleworking employees by objectives

Self-assessment questions:

- How will managers recognise a completed job that is done well?
- Can they describe their expectations about the output to their subordinates?

- Are managers aware of how long certain tasks take to accomplish? Do they have a realistic view so they can set deadlines that are not too pressing or not too lax?

Why is it important?

Telework raises a number of questions around performance. Employees and managers may be asking themselves the following questions: “Are ‘invisible’ workers working?” “How will my manager know what I’m doing?” “Will my career suffer if I telework?” “How will my positional status be obvious?”. These are valid questions, especially for teams that haven’t tried teleworking yet, or teams that perhaps had a negative experience with teleworking.

In order to reassure employees and build skills and infuse confidence in managers, as a response to these questions, several studies have indicated that the best method for managing teleworking employees is through a process called Management by Objectives (Konradt, Hertel, & Schmook, 2003) or Management by Results (Major, Verive, & Joice, 2008; Akkirman & Harris, 2005).

The main condition of managing employees by results is for the organisation and management to be quite specific about what the expectations are in terms of quality and quantity of output within a reasonable time-frame. Once the organisation or the team leader can clearly articulate the expectations towards employees, managing the employee who is teleworking is not going to be very different from managing an employee who is in the office.

What are the key actions to consider?

- If the public administration hasn’t done it yet, then it needs to empower the individual teams and their managers to discuss and agree on the quantitative and qualitative criteria of their work outputs, to make work results measurable. If this hasn’t been done in the past, then work roles need to be linked to work objectives and results.
- How can results be identified and the expected results formulated in local, regional and national authorities? There may be four rather distinct categories (Mazouz, 2012) of work output or service delivery that will determine how the expected results are articulated towards teams and individual employees. What are the kind of results that can be formulated and expected in public administrations?
 1. Service delivery results: For work and tasks that are linked to service delivery towards the public, the results may be largely based on the perception by the public about the service quality: friendliness and effectiveness of municipal employees, responsiveness, waiting time, confidentiality, accessibility of the service... etc. For these types of service, public administrations may define the quality criteria, measured based on internal information and data and feedback from the citizens via satisfaction surveys, post-service pulse surveys. These quality indicators can also be made public to ensure full transparency. Employees need to be regularly briefed about the importance of these criteria and given feedback about how it is going, so they can understand their role in improving performance.
 2. Management results: these are the types of results that are linked to the organisation’s internal processes. The foundation for these results is measuring how effectively the organisation is converting the resources at its disposal to goods and services that benefit citizens. These may be human resources, material resources, time, costs incurred, damage to property or the environment, number of beneficiaries.

3. Policy results: this category may measure how well the overall policy and political guidelines and strategic plans are translated into specific projects and then implemented. How relevant are the specific projects, their costs, the time it takes, the overall impact on the wellbeing and expectations of citizens?
4. Public administrations in addition may also monitor overall improvement results on a regular (yearly, biannual) basis. Taking the key indicators from all of the three performance categories above, and then comparing them periodically to see whether the tendencies are pointing in the right direction. In other words, systematic and periodic assessments of an organization in regard to both its service delivery results and its operational and strategic management targets make it possible to assess its overall performance.
 - The work on formulating expected results needs to happen on a team-level within regional, local and national authorities, as in any given structure the type of work individuals are performing will vary greatly depending on their team.
 - Managers need to clearly define a set of measurable performance objectives which can be monitored, changed and assessed via timely feedback, which is going to be applicable to all employees, regardless of whether they are teleworking or working in the office. This will ensure that teleworking is fully embedded in the way of working of the organisation and can be applied without disrupting the work of the team.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- The objectives for teleworking employees need to be aligned to the overall organisational and policy objectives, which have been set at higher levels. Therefore team-leaders have to ideally review team objectives every year, which is a time-consuming process and creates an additional administrative burden.
- In situations where there is a lot of change, i.e. elections, natural disaster, a national policy reform or the global health crisis due to COVID-19, teams have to pivot to tackling tasks that are the most urgent, and they have to let go of the previously fixed objectives. Management by Objectives assumes a relatively stable workflow, and in case of fire-fighting, it may create frustration for employees as they may feel constrained by previously set objectives.
- Another pitfall is not including the employee in contributing to the conversation on how their performance will be measured, what their goals and objectives should be, what is reasonably expected of them, whether they work in the office or not.
- Underestimating the effort it takes to manage by results or objectives, as setting realistic and achievable goals for employees is a highly complex process and needs senior management commitment. Setting unrealistic goals is counterproductive, instead of motivating employees, they either make them disengaged or employees may revert to unethical behaviour to attain the objectives.

In Annex IV. there is a practical tool in supporting local, regional and national authorities to implement management by objectives.

3.4 Communication

Self-assessment questions:

- Has the public administration already conducted an organisation-wide communication campaign on teleworking?
- Is there a dedicated website or intranet page regrouping all the information that managers and employees need to have about teleworking?
- Have managers been offered to participate in communications training?
- Has the organisation reviewed access to information prior to launching teleworking?
- Has the public administration communicated with the wider public, citizens or service users about teleworking?

Why is it important?

There are a number of aspects as to why communication is a key ingredient in ensuring the success of any teleworking programme. On the one hand, there is a lot of new information linked to teleworking that needs to be shared widely across the local, regional and national authority departments. There are new procedures linked to the possibility of requesting teleworking, or in case of the pandemic, employers mandating teleworking. These new procedures need to be as simple and accessible as possible, and they need to be communicated using different channels, to ensure employees know where to find this information. There is also a lot of new information around accessing files and records, instructions and guides on how to use the different software, these need to be made available across the board. Information sharing communication may include Guides, Toolkits, how-to video tutorials, information on the most useful phone numbers, e-mail addresses and resource persons (HR, IT, Security, OSH).

In addition to sharing information, communication also serves the purpose of advertising teleworking, clarifying different aspects and details and in general gaining trust and buy-in from leadership and employees. A communication campaign around teleworking may include testimonials, video testimonials, banners, a slogan or logo. Many organisations that have had success with teleworking or other flexible working arrangements have created a brand around this alternative way of working, sometimes referring to it as “agile working” or “smart working” and have used leadership role-modelling, photo or video testimonials, hashtags, posters and other creative material to normalise teleworking and boost its take-up.

There is also an important argument in favour of informing the wider community, stakeholders and citizens about the new way of working in the public administration, as this affects service delivery in a number of ways, from reduced opening hours to higher expectation towards citizens to use the internet and the website to conduct their municipal affairs, reflecting the modern employer agenda.

If certain or all of the employees within a team will be working remotely at least some of their working time, the team needs to rethink communication, in order to ensure continued collaboration and to reduce the isolation of teleworking employees. Research (Vries et al, 2018) has revealed that teleworking, when it is done on a prolonged basis may lead to employees disengagement, losing the social aspects of work and experiencing isolation and anxiety whether their careers may suffer. These colleagues, as a reaction, tend to either

under-communicate or over-communicate and team leaders need to be proactive and prevent both, as both of them reduce the performance of the team.

What are the key actions to consider?

- Organisations have to explicitly communicate about the benefits of teleworking and use senior leadership role-modelling to ensure that there is a good level of take-up. These communications campaigns have to be inclusive, easy to understand, engaging and motivating.
- Public authorities should establish new communication norms to suit the new ways of working, as these will bring predictability and certainty to virtual conversations and communication. Norms can exist on a team and individual levels and may include preferred response time, communication tool used, frequency of online meetings, turnaround time, length and level of detail in messages, use and tolerance of humour. The channels and the frequency of the communication will have to be adapted and to ensure that teleworking colleagues are not excluded from team meetings and other decisions that concern their work. These norms or communication etiquette should include the specific technology used for specific communication purposes, the frequency, whether to use a camera or not, dress code, interruptions, multitasking and working with sensitive information.
- Especially in the beginning, employees may need more hand-holding with the tools, the sources of information, setting up their home working environment, accessing records and data security. The entire public authority may decide to use a specific platform or tool for communication, so the question is, how much can employees or teams deviate from that decision?
- Organisational best practice shows that there are benefits to giving employees a single point of reference for all their information needs about teleworking, which contains the Telework Policy, the Telework Agreement Template, a Frequently Asked Questions section (which is regularly updated), all the contact information (names, e-mail addresses and phone numbers) employees and managers will need if they have a specific question about teleworking. This information can be on an internal website or on the intranet or the organisation's standard content management and HR systems.
- Communication should flow from many different sources, not only from HR. Central, regional or local government entities may choose to empower other departments to conduct an "aggressive" information campaign for example from the technology services department focusing on the technical aspects of teleworking, including how-to videos, step-by-step graphics.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- One of the mistakes organisations in the public and private sector may make in terms of communication, is believing that they have communicated enough already and stop it. Practice shows, however, that communication around teleworking or other new ways of working must be on-going, building on the small successes, using individual or team testimonials and ensuring that communication responds to the questions people may have about teleworking. As the organisation evolves and more and more employees are teleworking, there will be new challenges to tackle, new questions to answer, and therefore any communication effort must ensure that it responds to the actual information needed by employees at the time.

- Teams or individuals may encounter a number of problems with internal communication, to which team leaders must be attuned. If there were problems in the team, in the form of harassment or bullying, these problems won't disappear because employees are no longer in physical proximity, but will be continued online. These problems may include employees ghosting each other (not including an employee in e-mail communication), or an employee not responding to certain messages from certain colleagues, even if they need to provide information for the other person to do their job.
- Supervisors must also be aware that intensive online communication doesn't equate to effective teamwork or collaboration. Unless the team establishes clear ground rules and norms around communication, employees may use the tools and technology in very different ways, which can be a source of conflict and inefficiencies.

4. Key success factors to teleworking

Self-assessment questions:

- Has the Telework Policy been linked to strategic objectives of the local, regional or national authority, such as the modernisation agenda, diversity and inclusion, gender parity, employee wellbeing, real estate footprint, carbon footprint..?
- What additional requirements or expectations have been or will be placed on managers who supervise teleworking employees, and how will they be prepared and rewarded for them?
- What training will be provided for employees and managers around teleworking?
- How will the local, regional or central government ensure that teleworking employees will be treated fairly and equitably to employees working on-site?
- What type of flexible working options will be made available to employees whose role or personal circumstances doesn't allow them to work from home?
- How have the trade unions or the staff council been involved in the development of the Telework Policy and all its modalities?

Why is it important to consider additional enabling factors?

Teleworking can offer a host of benefits to both employees and public bodies and all levels of government, but with the condition that it is designed and practised correctly. So far the Toolkit has been focusing on the practical steps of implementing teleworking, whereas there are a number of success factors that need to be also considered when designing and implementing teleworking, each of which plays an important role in ensuring that teleworking meets the expectations of the organisation, employees and the broader community.

Beyond the Telework Policy or the Telework Agreement, a number of transversal issues impact on how teleworking is practised and implemented in an organisation. The issues that are addressed in this section are either the critical aspects of telework success, that have been flagged in decades worth of evaluation of telework programmes and other research publications. On the other hand, these issues have also been raised in key interviews and the survey that was conducted for this Toolkit, that garnered over 250 responses from public authorities from Council of Europe member States. Local, regional and national authorities as

employers and service providers need to be informed and act on the following issues, if they would like to exploit the full potential of teleworking, for their employees.

Telework Office

Introducing telework, especially in the first few years of the practice generates a number of additional administrative and managerial responsibilities. Direct supervisors have to be made aware of the policies, have to have access to the different tools and forms, they will be the ones to process requests, evaluate them, grant or decline them, justify the decision and then manage the teleworking team members by objectives, as well as tackle the problems that may arise in the context of teleworking. They would greatly benefit from additional resources and support. Employees would also greatly benefit from support and resources in the entire teleworking project life-cycle, from the request to working from home and setting up their home-office environment, as well as occasional trouble-shooting. One of the solutions to address the additional work and resource allocation that is created by the implementation of teleworking across the national, regional or local public bodies is to set up a centralised Telework Office. The rationale behind centralising all knowledge and administrative issues at one office is twofold: on the one hand, it provides resource efficiency gains, as a small team can be trained and equipped with all the information, know-how and tools the organisation needs to implement teleworking, and secondly, this also reduces the time employees and managers spend on trying to find the right information and provides clarity to them on where they can turn to. The role of the dedicated Telework office staff is to maintain the special dedicated Website or intranet on Teleworking, to constantly update the policies and documents, to manage the platform on which employees can request teleworking and on which line managers approve or deny these requests, follow-up on declined requests, provide additional information and training to staff and managers and be a focal point for questions and queries. Over time they may also gain additional responsibilities, for instance, linked to the data collection with regards to uptake of teleworking or managing the employee surveys linked to teleworking, and reporting to senior management about this.

Organisational culture

It is not enough to have a Telework Policy or even a Telework Office to successfully implement teleworking in a public administration, the culture of the organisation plays a very important role in how much employees feel like they can avail of their right to work from home, without damaging their career prospects, missing out on challenging and interesting work opportunities or be under increased scrutiny by their direct supervisors. In certain organisations, there is still the prevailing belief, which was also confirmed by some of the responses in the survey, that “telework is not work”. In the absence of a supportive organisational culture, employees will be reluctant to request teleworking, even if it would greatly improve their work-life balance and even performance. And if employees do telework in an unsupportive working environment, they will pay the price for it, either in a more negative performance appraisal, a delay or stop in their career progression, missing out on important development and career opportunities.

What are the hallmarks of an organisational culture that supports teleworking? These can be listed as the following:

- Trust between supervisors and employees and among team-members

- Open and inclusive communication
- Culture of teamwork and collaboration
- Employees all understanding the mission and priorities of the organisation
- Organising work and distributing tasks and projects with bearing in mind teleworking employees
- Line managers refraining from excessive monitoring of a teleworking employee (phone calls, check-ins, e-mails...)
- Employees won't feel they need to excessively communicate while teleworking to show that they are "actually working"
- No resentment or jealousy among coworkers, between those who can telework and those who cannot and there is no differential treatment between the employees who telework and those who don't

Training and skills building for both managers and employees

Managing teleworking employees or self-management while teleworking does not come naturally to the majority of employees. Just simply allowing employees to stay at home and work there doesn't yield the best results for the organisation. The single most important factor in creating a successful telework relationship between the employee and manager is a shared definition and understanding of mutual expectations.

Training is one of the most important, but often neglected success factors of a formal teleworking programme within public administrations. Ideally, all employees should be mandated the training on teleworking, not only the employees that telework, as there will be a number of employees, who will be collaborating with their teleworking colleagues, while remaining stationary in the offices or premises of their employer. Employees and supervisors all benefit from role-specific telework training, as it ensures that everyone understands the administration's Telework Policy, the key steps involved in setting up a home-based work environment, the critical success factors for teleworking, the roles and responsibilities of managers and employees. Training also needs to be adjusted to the specific context and department of the public authority, as there will be very different needs and prior experience with teleworking from one service to another.

Training topics may include:

- General information about the Telework Policy, the Telework Agreement and additional resources
- Skills building for direct supervisors in managing teleworkers by objectives, performance targets and evaluation
- Effective communication and collaboration for distributed teams
- Occupational health and safety, IT use and data security aspects of teleworking
- Tools for supporting teleworkers
- Trust-building to improve team performance

Leaving employees to figure out the different aspects of teleworking on their own, from IT to accessing records can be time-consuming and highly ineffective, and may even be the reason why employees abandon teleworking entirely. It is much more effective and saves costs to train all employees upfront and thus reduce time inefficiencies and frustration.

Gender dimension

Central, regional and local governments need to be aware that there are existing gender differences, which mean that teleworking is not accessible to women and men in the same way, and that the benefits of teleworking also differ between the genders. One recent study (Chung and van der Lippe, 2020) has shown that in societies where women are shouldering the bulk of household and caregiving tasks, teleworking creates a “double bind” for them. Women are expected to deliver their work responsibilities for their employer, and also ensure their household and care responsibilities, after all, “they are at home”. These tasks include childcare or care for other frail or ill relatives, household chores such as cooking, cleaning or other administrative tasks linked to the household.

This difference has been accentuated by the COVID-19 crisis, during which women had to shoulder the childcare, home-schooling and other care responsibilities, which ensued following school and childcare service closures. Even if men have stepped up their contribution in terms of care and chores, some studies estimate that the pandemic has set back gender equality progress globally by 10 years (McKinsey, 2020). Therefore it is paramount for public administrations to be aware of the gendered nature of teleworking, and align the Telework Policy with other internal gender parity and diversity policies they may have, to ensure that the effects of these policies reinforce each other, and not the opposite.

Trade Union involvement

It is recommended good practice to involve unions and other representative bodies of employees, such as the staff council as early as possible in the process of developing and implementing a Telework Policy. When appropriately informed and involved, unions can be a very important ally in instituting teleworking across local, regional and national governments and departments. They can use their network to bring together a representative group of employees for consultations and focus groups, they can help with validating the different aspects of the Telework Policy and the Telework Agreement, and can relay information and tools via their members, reinforcing communication efforts. Trade unions are particularly concerned that any formal Telework Policy should apply fairly and equitably to all employees to avoid arbitrary decisions by line-managers or excluding certain employees for accessing teleworking. Trade unions would therefore like to be involved in the process as early as possible and have a clear understanding as to how they will be able to represent the interest of their members, with a specific view on how teleworking will affect employment and working conditions.

5. Evaluating and Reviewing the Telework Policy

Self-assessment questions:

- Have organisation-wide criteria been established to measure the success of teleworking?

- Has there been an evaluation prior to the introduction of teleworking for a number of qualitative and quantitative aspects of the work of the public administration, which can be used as a baseline to track changes?
- Has the management of teleworking teams been included in the performance appraisal of managers and supervisors?
- How often will the public administration evaluate teleworking and what are the procedures to revise the telework policy?

Why is it important?

Just as with any other organisational or human resource policy, public administrations are highly encouraged to regularly review and evaluate the Telework Policy and practice within their organisations. Due to the complexity and volatility of the working environment, the Telework Policy may need to be regularly adapted and updated to suit the given circumstances, as was the case with the global pandemic. Working methods, employee skills and citizens' expectations are also constantly changing, which may also have an impact on where and when work at public administrations gets done. It is recommended that pilot programmes should be reviewed after six months, and for on-going programmes, the evaluation period should be 1-2 years.

What are the key actions to consider?

- The evaluation and review of policies may need to be carried out more frequently in the first years of introducing teleworking, and with practice and experience, the evaluation can become less frequent. The first periodic evaluation should happen fairly close to the launch of the Telework Policy, definitely within the first year. This will provide valuable information to HR and management as to what parts of the policy work, and what needs to be changed, by either making it less prescriptive or more specific.
- Evaluation should always be using a mix of data and qualitative information and should involve both groups of employees, teleworkers and non-teleworkers. Only this way will the public administration gain a realistic understanding of what works well and what needs to be adapted or improved and the nuanced experience of employees and citizens.
- The results of the evaluation should always be shared back with all employees (both teleworkers and non-teleworkers) and even with citizens and stakeholders.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- One of the most important pitfalls is to assume that the Teleworking policy will be relevant for many years to come, without taking into consideration the different factors that may render parts of the policy irrelevant, cumbersome or out-dated.
- Another pitfall is not having clarity on the review and modification process of the Teleworking policy, what shall be done with an outdated aspect of the policy, who can make the change and who can approve, and subsequently allocating resources to communicating the changes to all employees, and implementing training if necessary. Examples for such issues may include the request procedure (offline or online), justification of approval or dismissal of a request, eligibility criteria..etc.

Box 6: Evaluation criteria for teleworking in public administrations (examples)

- Department service delivery (quality and quantity)
- Client service delivery and staff availability to the public
- Different cost categories (e.g. equipment repair, software, hardware, training costs, real estate, office furniture, IT customer service)
- Impact on other departments, functions or staff
- Staff turnover, retention or churn
- Take-up of the telework policy (number of teleworking days vs total number of eligible days)
- Number of calls or e-mails to the IT department or help-desk on issues linked to technology while working from home
- Number of calls or e-mails to the occupational health and safety department or the occupational health service provider (musculoskeletal injuries, pain, mental health issues)
- Absenteeism rates
- Overtime per employee per department
- Employee satisfaction and engagement
- Applicants per job opening (for teleworking and non-teleworking department)
- Number of calls or e-mails to the Staff Council or Trade Union representative

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7. Annexes

Annex I. Telework Assessment Form

This assessment form is designed to be used by the direct supervisor and the teleworker to assess whether the role and the organisational skills of the employee make them a suitable candidate for teleworking. It focuses on 4 areas and asks specific questions. If the responses to the majority of the questions are 'YES', then the employee can telework with a high degree of confidence. Any 'NO' answer should be viewed as a point for discussion and an opportunity for improvement until all questions can be answered with a 'YES'. It is recommended that both the employee and the supervisor go through the questions independently and then they jointly discuss their answers.

Criteria	Yes or No	Comments or Concerns
Role assessment		
The role includes tasks that can be accomplished Independently from an alternative location.		
The role requires minimal face-to-face interaction with others (team members, the public, other stakeholders such as media).		
The need for face-to-face interaction can be replaced by other means, such as online communication via chat programs, email or video communication tools.		
The information the employee needs can be either accessed remotely or files/materials can be taken home from the office.		
The quality and quantity of tasks and deliverables are relatively easily evaluated.		

Employee assessment		
The employee took part successfully in the teleworking pilot or test-day.		
In the most recent performance evaluation of the employee, no major issues were flagged and their performance is satisfactory overall.		
The employee demonstrates that they can organise their work well, not missing deadlines, getting everything done satisfactorily.		
The employee demonstrates good time management skills.		
The employee is comfortable working alone and communicating remotely, by voice and video.		
The employee is cleared for managing sensitive or confidential information and is aware of security and cyber corruption risks.		
Home office assessment		
The employee is aware of the occupational health and safety risks of the home working environment.		
The home work environment of the employee is suitable for full days of teleworking.		
The employee is available to work and accessible during the agreed core hours while		

teleworking.		
The employee has the necessary equipment and high-speed Internet with sufficient bandwidth at home.		
Team work assessment		
Team members teleworking won't have any negative impact on service delivery, however may improve the quality of the output.		
The telework arrangement will maintain or improve client services and staff availability to the public.		
The telework arrangement will be cost neutral.		
The telework arrangement will have no significant negative impact on other departments, clients or stakeholders.		
The telework arrangement will maintain or improve the productivity of the team.		
The telework arrangement will contribute to the hiring or retention of productive and engaged staff.		
Overall number of YES answers:	/21	

Annex II. Telework Agreement Sample

SAMPLE TELEWORK AGREEMENT

This Telework Agreement is concluded between _____
 _____ (referred to as “employee”) and _____
 _____ (referred to as “supervisor”), employees of
 _____ (name of the government body and entity, referred to as
 “employer”).

This telework Agreement begins on (dd/mm/yy) _____ and ends on
 _____ (dd/mm/yy) or ends with the end of the employment contract of the
 employee.

An initial review of the telework will be done on (dd/mm/yy) _____ to evaluate
 the effectiveness of teleworking, make adjustments, agree on continuation or end the
 Agreement.

Terms of agreement

The employee and supervisor have both read, discussed and agree to follow the Telework
 Policy of (name of entity) _____.

Work Hours, Overtime, Vacation

Work hours are not expected to change during the telework period. In the event that
 overtime is anticipated, this must be discussed and approved in advance with the
 supervisor, just as any overtime scheduling would normally have to be approved.

Weekday	Office	Alternate work site	Start	Finish
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				

The daily work schedule for the days when the employees teleworking is subject to
 negotiation with and approval by the employee's supervisor. The supervisor may require
 that employees work certain “core hours” and be accessible during those hours.

Equipment

The employee agrees that the use of the equipment provided by the employer, such as laptop computer, software, headset, cloud storage and other accessories are only being used by the teleworking employee, for purposes strictly related to the role and tasks, including participation in training activities. The employee must take appropriate action to protect the equipment provided by the Employer from damage or theft. Once the telework is discontinued the Employee must return all equipment to the Employer.

In the event of equipment failure or malfunction, the employee agrees to notify the supervisor immediately. Maintenance, repair and replacement of the equipment owned by the employer, issued to teleworkers is the responsibility of the employer.

If the employer does not provide the employee with the above mentioned equipment and tools, the employee may use personal equipment for teleworking purposes. In such cases, the employee will be in charge of the maintenance and insurance required for the equipment. The employer does not assume liability for loss, damage or wear of employee-owned equipment.

The employee has received the following equipment from the employer to be able to telework: _____ (itemized list of equipment received) on the (dd/mm/yy) _____ .

Risk Management

The employee has participated at the mandatory cybersecurity and IT training for teleworkers on the (dd/mm/yy) _____ and has received and read the Guide on preventing IT and cybersecurity risks.

Termination of Agreement

Either party may terminate the Telework Agreement, with or without cause, upon reasonable notice, in writing, to the other party. This Agreement is not a contract of employment and may not be construed as such.

Employee Acknowledgment

I understand teleworking is voluntary and that my supervisor or I may end this Telework Agreement at any time. I also understand that this Agreement is not a contract for employment. Furthermore, by signing this Telework Agreement I acknowledge I have read and will abide by the _____ (name of the employer) Telework Policy, including any other relevant documentation.

Employee's signature:

Place and date:

Supervisor's Review

I have reviewed the employee's Telework Agreement and approve this request.

or

I have reviewed the employee's Telework Agreement request and I am unable to approve this request at this time for the following reason(s):

Supervisor's signature:

Date:

Contact details:

Address of the employee's work site:

Email address of employee:

Phone number(s):

Work Schedule:

Annex III. Other resources

Title	Short Description
Teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond - A Practical Guide	<p>The purpose of the Guide, developed by the ILO, is to provide practical and actionable recommendations for effective teleworking. The Guide also includes a number of case examples regarding how employers and policymakers have been handling teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Link: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms_751232.pdf </p>
European Framework Agreement on Telework	<p>The European Framework Agreement on Telework is the first autonomous agreement negotiated by the EU social partners. This fundamental document provides guidance on data protection, privacy, work</p>

	<p>organisation, health and safety, training, and career prospects of teleworking.</p> <p>Link: https://www.etuc.org/en/framework-agreement-telework</p>
Telework Essentials Toolkit	<p>This Toolkit, by CISA, is designed to assist business leaders, IT staff, and end users in their transition to a secure, permanent telework environment through simple, actionable recommendations.</p> <p>Link: https://www.cisa.gov/publication/telework-essentials-toolkit#:~:text=The%20Telework%20Essentials%20Toolkit%20is,%2C%20IT%20professionals%2C%20and%20teleworkers.</p>
Virtual Management - inspiration and tools (Danish)	<p>The Virtual Management platform, by the Danish Employees and Competence Agency, provides a number of very practical advice in managing virtual teams.</p> <p>Link: https://www.medst.dk/arbejdsmraader/ledelse/virtuel-ledelse-inspiration-og-vaerktoejer/</p>
Guide to employees on agile working by a county council in the UK	<p>The Monmouthshire County Council Agile Working Guide provides a practical insight in how public sector organisations can implement Agile Working Policies effectively.</p> <p>Link: https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2016/04/Agile-Working-Policy.pdf</p>

Annex IV. Management by Objectives

Managing by Objectives is a management tool that helps teams to agree on and clearly communicate about expectations between the supervisor and the employee. This is particularly important as the teleworking employee is not only physically removed from the office and the supervisor and other team members, but also has to work in a more autonomous way.

What are some of the key principles for ensuring that management by objectives is understood by everyone and is successful:

1. Setting objectives. Teleworkers must always be included in the process of establishing the objectives. The employee this way can give their valuable input to the objectives concerning their capabilities, their time constraints and their own take on how and by when the objectives will be achieved.

In addition to simply stating the objectives, there needs to be additional detail and clarity describing the quality of the results or objectives.

2. Break down the objectives into manageable chunks of work. These will be the tasks that will help the individual and the team reach the objectives. The more the tasks are clearly described and explained, the more the teleworker can work independently. There are tasks which require team collaboration, to a higher or lower level of intensity. There should be a clear understanding and agreement between team members as to how the collaboration should take place. In some cases these can also take place while one or several of the team members are working from home via video calls, or may need to take place in person at the office for more effectiveness.
3. Find a way to establish units of measurement, make tasks measurable in an objective and realistic way. These indicators may include the time by which the task should be accomplished, the quality criteria, associated costs if applicable. There may be only qualitative, or only quantitative criteria, or both (i.e. number of pages of a report, number of case files processed, quality standard of a publication, service user satisfaction measured by narrative or qualitative indicators in a survey form or feedback email...).
4. In order for teleworking and independent, autonomous working to be successful, the objectives need to be balanced out with the available resources for the employee. If the employee doesn't have access to key information or documents, doesn't have the necessary contact information, cannot use e-mail or voice or video call tools, isn't familiar with the technology, the organisation or the processes, the employee will have great difficulty in achieving the objectives. Ensuring that the employees have all the information and resources available to them to be able to accomplish their tasks and reach the objectives even while teleworking is the responsibility of the direct supervisor. The supervisor and the employee can also clarify before the teleworking begins, and maybe fix it in the Telework Agreement, how and in what form the employee can ask for support or help from colleagues or the supervisor while

teleworking (e-mail, messaging apps, phone...).

5. The line manager and the employee should agree on how they will be conducting periodic progress reviews. There will be a need for more frequent check-ins and progress updates early in the process, and perhaps even towards the end, right before the employee accomplished the tasks or the objectives. There should be clarity on both sides about the frequency and the form of the progress review, what is expected of the employee in terms of reporting (formal report, an email, a draft product, a video or in-person meeting). The manager will be able to assess the autonomy and the resources of the teleworking employee, provide valuable feedback so the employee can continue working on the task or objective while continuously edging closer to the finished task or accomplished objective.
6. One of the challenges for both employees and managers is to avoid overload. There may be several reasons why employees may be overloaded with work and feel overwhelmed, such as limited available staff resources, conflicting priorities, too tight deadlines, unrealistic objectives or changing priorities from the top. Line managers are therefore in a critical position to mitigate work overload for their team members. What happens if teleworking employees are overloaded? They start missing deadlines, make mistakes, become disengaged or be at risk of a burnout.