WORKING PAPER

Working conditions and sustainable work

Working time in the context of flexible working and teleworking: Regulatory updates in the 27 Member Sates (2021–2024)

Working anytime, anywhere: The quality of working time in the EU

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Introduction

This report analyses the regulation of working time and organisation of work, telework and digitalisation in the 27 Member States and Norway. It identifies changes in regulations (legislation and collective agreements) that have taken place from 2021 to 2024. Among others, the following aspects are considered: duration of working time, organisation of working time, access to compressed weeks, recording and monitoring of working time, right to disconnect, the telework regime, employment conditions under telework and working time related to platform work, algorithmic management and artificial intelligence (AI) in the workplace. All of these aspects are relevant for the protection of employees in a context characterised by greater flexibility with regard to working time and work location and an expansion of flexible ways of organising work.

The report is mainly based on the analysis of the contributions from the Network of Eurofound Correspondents who gathered information on working time and telework legislation and collective agreements in all Member States and Norway.

The structure of this report is as follows:

- Chapter 1 analyses new developments on legislation on working time regulation
- Chapter 2 analyses new developments on legislation on telework and digitalisation
- Chapter 3 examines existing collective agreements at sectoral level dealing with working time, with a focus on flexible work provisions, and telework
- Chapter 4 outlines the outcomes of collective bargaining at company level
- Chapter 5 provides a concluding overview of the findings of the report and summarises national debates and general trends towards changes in the nature of work

Changes in legislation during the pandemic and post-pandemic context on working time and organisation of work

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were many developments in working time across the EU. This chapter will focus on these new developments exploring different dimensions of working time regulation aiming at increasing employers and/or workers capacity to modify regular working time patterns or to better protect workers against negative impacts on working time flexibility.

New legislative initiatives

Since 2021, 20 countries have introduced legislative reforms concerning working time and the organisation of work, either by enacting new legal provisions or updating existing ones. These changes were motivated by the need to adapt legal frameworks to post-pandemic realities marked by the growing digitisation of work processes and increased flexibility in working hours; address persistent issues around work–life balance; and promote greater flexibility in how working time is structured. The pace and nature of these reforms vary, with some countries introducing dedicated provisions, others amending the already existing ones, and a few upholding negotiated agreements. In many cases, social partners were actively involved, especially in countries with a tradition of social dialogue.

There were many developments in working time across the EU.

Table 1. Changes in national regulations on working time and organisation of work

Country	Legislative provision	Date of entry into force	Legislative approach	Scope	Social partners' involvement
Belgium	Labour Deal – Act of 3 October 2022 containing various labour provisions	3 October 2022	Separate piece of legislation including amendments to the 1971 Labour Law	Public and private sector employees	Partially
Cyprus	Law no. 25(I)2023 Article 10, Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions	13 Abril 2023	Separate piece of legislation	All employees with some exceptions	Not specified
Czech Republic	Act No. 230/2024 Coll. amending the Labour Code	1 January 2025	Amendment to the Labour Code	All employees	Not specified
Denmark	Amendment to The Working Environment Act	1 July 2024	Update to existing legislation	All employees	Not specified
Estonia	Amendment to Employment Contracts Act § 432 – Employees with independent decision-making capacity	24 December 2022	Amendment to the Employment Contracts Act	Case-by-case based agreement between employer and employee	Not specified
Spain	V National Agreement for Employment and Collective Bargaining (V AENC)	10 May 2023	Separate piece (collective agreement)	Public and private employees across specific sectors	Yes
France	Law no. 2022-1157 and amendment by Law no. 2025-127	17 August 2022	Amendment to Financial Law for 2022 extended to	Private sector employees	Not specified

			December 2026 by Law no. 2025-127		
Greece	Law 4808/2021 Art. 55, par. 2, Establishment of working time limits and Art. 59, par. 2, Agreement on teleworking time arrangements	19 June 2021	Amendment to Art. 41 of Law 1892/1990	Private sector employees	Not specified
Croatia	Amendment to Labour Act	1 January 2023	Amendment to previous legislation	All workers in public and private sector	Not specified
Ireland	Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023	2023 (operational in 2024)	Separate piece of legislation	All employees, especially women	Not specified
Italy	National Protocol on Agile Work in accordance with Law 81/2017	7 December 2021	Framework agreement (not legislation)	Private sector employees (esp. vulnerable and disabled)	Yes
Lithuania	Multiple amendments to Labour Code: Law no. XIV-1189, Law no. XIV-2704 and Law no. XIV-3034	28 June 2022 13 June 2024 24 October 2024	Amendments to existing Labour Code	Public and private sector employees, parents, carers	Not specified
Luxembourg	Law of 15 August 2023 and Law of 28 June 2023	15 August 2023 and 28 June 2023	Separate legislation inserted into Labour Code and amendment to existing laws	Employees with caregiving responsibilities and digital tool users	Not specified
Latvia	Amendments to Labour Law: 27 May 2021, 16 June 2022 and 19 September 2024)	1 August 2021 1 August 2022	Amendments to Labour Law	All workers, including remote workers	Not specified

		22 October 2024			
Malta	Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers Regulations (S.L. 452.125)	August 2022	Separate legislation	All workers with employment contracts	Not specified
Poland	2023 Labour Code Amendment	26 April 2023	Amendment to previous legislation	Employees with standard contracts	Not specified
Portugal	Law 13/2023: Amendments to Labour Code in the framework of Decent Work Agenda	1 May 2023	Amendment to Labour Code (Law no. 7/2009)	Public and private sector companies	Not specified
Romania	Law No. 283/2022	19 October 2022	Amendment to Labour Code (Law no. 53/2003)	All employees	Not specified
Slovenia	Employment Relationship Act ZDR-1D, 2023) and Employment Records Act (ZEPDSV-A)	November 2023 and April 2023	Amendments to previous legislation	All employees	Not specified
Slovakia	Labour Code	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.

Source: Questionnaire for the Comparative Analytical Report (CAR): Working Time in the context of increasing flexible working in the aftermath the pandemic. Network of Eurofound Correspondents

Main topics introduced in legislation on working time

For this section, 8 key regulatory dimensions were considered, namely the duration of working time, organisation of working time (working time flexibility), access to compressed weeks, recording and monitoring of working time, organisation of working time related to climate change, right to disconnect, adjustment of workload and different was of considering work/working time. Comparative analysis summarised in Table 2 below shows that some themes have gained importance in recent regulatory reforms across EU countries. These include organisation working time, the right to disconnect and monitoring and surveillance. Other topics such as the duration of working time or the adjustment of workload have been only addressed in a few countries despite growing public debates. There were two dimension where no legislation was identified: organisation of working time related to climate change or cleaner economy and meaning of working time. Below we provide further details of the policy reforms developed withing each dimension.

Table 2. Main topics introduced in recent legislation on working time

Topic	Countries
Duration of working time	Greece, Ireland, Spain (Government bill pendent of approval in the parliament)
Organisation of working time (for example, flexible working hours / start / finished or ad-hoc reduced hours)	Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Portugal and Romania
Access to compressed weeks (ad hoc reductions of days working during the week)	Belgium, Greece, Portugal and Poland
Recording and monitoring working time	Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Croatia, Malta, Portugal Slovenia
Organisation of working time related to climate change or cleaner economy	-
Right to disconnect	Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus (only for teleworkers), Greece, Croatia, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovakia and Slovenia
Adjustment of workload	Estonia, Finland, France
Meaning of working time	-

Source: Questionnaire for the Comparative Analytical Report (CAR): Working Time in the context of increasing flexible working in the aftermath the pandemic. Network of Eurofound Correspondents

Duration of working time

Duration of working time is regulated by the Working Time Directive (WTD), which sets up that the average working time for each seven-day period, including overtime, cannot exceed 48 hours. However, member states can allow individual employees to opt-out of this limit through collective agreements. In 2021, three groups of European countries could be distinguished in terms of the maximum duration of working week time regulated through statutory legislation:

- those countries that set their maximum weekly hours at the 48 hours specified by the Working Time Directive (Denmark, Germany, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Ireland and the Netherlands);
- those countries that operate under a limit of 40 hours (Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Spain, Greece, Croatia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Latvia, Malta, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia);
- those two countries which set up a maximum weekly working time lower than 40 hours (38 hours in Belgium and 35 hours in France) (Eurofound database on wages, working time and collective disputes, 2023)

After the pandemic outbreak, the regulation on maximum duration of working week time was discussed in a number of countries. According to the data gathered through the Network of Eurofound Correspondents, from 2021 to 2024, the pandemic gave rise to new debates or intensified existing ones regarding the reduction of working week in different countries, but mostly limited to “pilot” experiences on the establishment of four-days week (Italy, Denmark, Germany, Ireland), through collective bargaining (Austria) or by means legal initiatives not yet implemented (Lithuania, Luxembourg, Spain and Sweden). In Luxembourg, the proposal for a 35-hour work week has garnered significant support, prompting a study on the potential impacts of reduced working hours. The new government, elected in October 2023, aims to reorganize working time while maintaining the 40-hour week principle. They plan to consult with social partners to adapt weekly rest periods and reform time savings account legislation. In Sweden, the Social Democratic Party took a position to reduce weekly working hours to 35, but the current government, a coalition of centre- and right-wing parties, is not likely to adopt such proposal. Similarly, the Spanish government passed a draft-bill in May 2025 to reduce maximum working week from 40 to 37.5 hours a week following the agreement with trade union organisations, but it still needs to be debated and ratified in the Parliament and faces the opposition of right-wing parties, and main employers’ associations.

According to the data gathered through the Network of Euro found Correspondents, from 2021 to 2024 only Greece has approved legal reforms modifying maximum statutory working time. This legal reform stand in contrast to attempts to reduce working hours. New legislation, which came into effect by July 2024, allows employees to work up to 48 hours in a week as opposed to 40. The reform only applies to businesses which operate on a 24-hour basis and is optional for workers, who get paid an extra 40% for the overtime they do. As informed in the Greek national contribution, the law has sparked debate, with proponents citing productivity benefits and trade unions warning of deteriorating work conditions. In response, the Greek government has initiated dialogues with social partners to strengthen collective bargaining frameworks with a view to ensure that changes in the regulation are implemented with consensus and protecting workers’ rights.

It is also worth mentioning the case of Ireland, where EU directive on working time has come into effect for the Defence Forces following new regulation approved in 2025. Accordingly, members of the Defence Forces are now entitled to statutory rights regarding daily breaks, weekly rest, maximum working hours, and annual leave.

Organisation of working time: working time flexibility

Working time flexibility refers to the ability of the employer and/or employee to modify the regular working time pattern, rather than the mere existence of atypical forms of employment contracts (Eurofound, 2013).

At EU level, the main regulation addressing flexible work arrangements has been the Directive (EU) 2019/1158 on work-life balance for parents and carers. This Directive gave all working parents of children up to at least 8 years and all carers a right to request flexible working arrangements (Article 9 of the Directive). These can include remote working arrangements, but also flexible working schedules and a reduction in working hours.

Before the outbreak of COVID-19, various forms of flexitime were in place across EU Member States. In several countries flexitime arrangements were already adopted and implemented prior to the pandemic (Austria, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands and Sweden) (Eurofound, 2024a).

The pandemic led to a surge in flexible working practices with many workers wanting to focus on their work–life balance and have more time for their family and personal life. However, a recent

Eurofound article (Eurofound, 2024a) highlights that in the post-pandemic context, there were very few policy developments on flexible working hours. The data gathered through the Network of Eurofound Correspondents shows
that 15 countries have addressed different aspects related working time flexibility through statutory legislation reforms from 2021 to 2024.

First, several countries have approved legal amendments on the right to request flexible work arrangement, in most of the cases following the transposition of the EU Directive on Work-life balance. This aspect is mentioned in the country
reports of Bulgaria, Czechia, Greece, Denmark, Croatia, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Portugal and Romania. Flexible work arrangements generally include part-time hours, flexitime or adjusted work schedules (Croatia, Lithuania, Ireland, Portugal, Poland, Romania) and telework (e.g., Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Poland). This right to request flexible work arrangements is mainly applicable to workers with care or work-life balance needs and, in some cases, pregnant workers (e.g., Latvia).

Second, there are three countries which have set up new rules on the mechanisms for increasing working hours (Greece, Czechia, Lithuania, Portugal) although through different approaches. In Greece, Law 5053/26.09.2023 (Articles 25 and 26) has increased employer's capacity to extent working time by allowing companies to unilaterally implement six-day workweek in certain industries with continuous operation or capable operation. In Czechia, Lithuania and Portugal, legal reforms have been aimed at improving worker's rights in the context of overtime or better protect workers with care needs. In Czechia, a legal amendment approved in 2023 (sections 240(3), 241 and 241a of the Labour Code) sets up that pregnant employees and employees caring for a child under one year of age may not be ordered to work overtime. In Lithuania, an amendment to the Labour Code that come into effect on 1 January 2025 sets up that overtime work will only be permissible if the employee gives written consent, except in cases explicitly defined by law. In Portugal, overtime pay is increased if total annual overtime hours exceed 100, payable at 150% (rather than 125%) of normal pay for the first hour of overtime per week and 175% (rather than 137.5%) for any additional hours, and payable at 200% for overtime on a weekly rest day or public holiday (rather than 150%).

Third, there are at least three countries which have set up new provisions providing workers with more autonomy in the organisation of working time (Czechia, Estonia, Romania). In Czechia, recent legal amendment to the Labour Code (Section 87a) has extended the possibility of employees to schedule their own working hours. From 1 January 2025, all employees can now self-schedule their working hours, with a written agreement between the employer and employee outlining specific conditions, including maximum shift lengths, breaks, and restrictions on night or weekend work. In Estonia, 2022 legislation recognises the figure of employees with independent decision-making capacity. The Employment contracts Acts provides for the figure of 'employee with independent decision-making capacity' for an employee who has the freedom to decide when and where to work due to the nature of their jobs upon the agreement with their employers. In Romania, a reform of the Labour Code approved in October 2022 sets up that employer can establish individualised work schedules, which may have a limited duration, for all employees, including those who benefit from carer's leave, with their consent or at their request. Individualised work programmes are a flexible way of organising working time. The individualised work programme can function only in compliance with the provisions regarding normal working time and overtime.

Fourth, there is one country which reports on recent updates on working time accounts. In Hungary, under changes from 1 January 2023 the application of a working time accounts period must be laid down in writing (start and end of reference period) including daily working time during the period, but putting out a notice in public is enough - Section 22(2). The weekly rest period minimum is 40 hours including a full calendar day, but in the reference period resting time must average out at a minimum of 48 hours per week.

Finally, in Finland, a notable legal amendment in force since January 2025 has expanded the scope for local-level level bargaining to derogate or agree on more flexible arrangements for working hours. The new reform allows derogations to companies, regardless of their membership in employer associations.

Access to compressed weeks

Compressed working hours is an arrangement by which full-time employees concentrate their total hours over fewer working days. Compressed working weeks do not necessarily involve a reduction in total hours but their reallocation into fewer days than in a standard working week, resulting in longer working days. An example is the four-days week.

Before the outbreak of the pandemic, there were barely any experiences on compressed working time in the EU countries. In the Nordic countries there were some pilot programmes for public sector employees, such as the programme in the Swedish city of Gothenburg tested the impact of reduced working hours in a retirement home over 23 months (Cuello, 2023). In France, the idea of a four-day workweek coupled with a reduction in working hours for the purpose of job sharing was brought into the discussions related to the Robien law (11 June 1996). Although the law did not make reference to the 4-day week, several companies adopted this work organisation. Also, Belgium implemented a law similar in its incentivizing framework to the Robien law (this time through a flat-rate subsidy per affected employee) aimed at promoting the four-day workweek (Eurofound, 2024b).

With the gradual easing of the Covid-19 pandemic, the idea of a four-day workweek has gradually gained prominence in social and political debates. The data gathered through the Network of Eurofound Correspondents shows that at least four countries have enacted new legal provisions or developed pilot projects enabling compressed workweeks: Belgium, Greece, Portugal and Poland.

In Belgium, the so-called Labour Deal (Arbeidsdeal; Act of October 3, 2022, Containing Various Labour Provisions) sets up an option for a compressed workweek: doing the 38 hours of full-time work on four days instead of five.

In Greece, Law 4808/2021 provides for the possibility of a four-day working week but without a reduction in working time. Subject to an agreement between the employee and the employer, in the case of full-time contracts, employees are given the opportunity to work a four-day week on a full-time basis for 40 hours a week and 10 hours per day. This working time arrangement system may be applied for a certain period in one calendar year. When this system is applied, employees are not permitted to work for more than 10 hours per day or 40 hours per week across 4 days.

In Portugal, at the end of 2022, the government introduced the so-called Pilot project for a four-day workweek in the private sector. The initiative was developed in collaboration with the *4 Day Week Global foundation*. The Institute for Employment and Vocational Training oversaw the program’s implementation and management, which ran during the second half of 2023. This policy measure was established by Article 204(2) of Law No. 12/2022, of June 27, which approved the State Budget for 2022. The objectives, terms and conditions of its implementation were defined by the Ordinance no. 301/2022.

In Poland, there is also a pilot programme on a four-day work week. This initiative, launched in June 2025, allows businesses and organizations to voluntarily test various shortened work schedules, including a four-day work week or reduced daily hours.

Recording of working time

Digitalisation and extended working time flexibility have given rise to an 'always-on' work culture whereby employees are expected to be reachable and responsive to job requests or work-related communications beyond working hours. In this context, working time recording regulation can contribute to prevent overtime and work requests outside working time by improving the enforcement of working time legislation (European Commission, 2024).

At EU level, the Working Time Directive does not explicitly contain provisions on the recording of working time. However, in its case law interpreting the Directive, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) has ruled that there is an obligation to record the daily working time of employees. From this follows that, while the Working Time Directive does not establish the specific nature of the arrangements to be adopted by each Member State, it requires Member States to take necessary measures to ensure that every worker is entitled to the limitations on time guaranteed by the Directive (European Commission, 2024).

Before the pandemic crisis, several countries already have an obligation to record all working time, even before the CJEU judgement: Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Finland, Slovenia, Croatia, Austria, Estonia, Latvia, Slovakia, Romania, Portugal, Poland (Ius Laboris, 2020)). Since 2021, the information gathered by the Network of Eurofound Correspondents shows that there are 11 countries which have approved or updated regulation on working time recording: Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Croatia, Malta, Portugal and Slovenia. In 9 out of these 11 countries, new legislation has set up the procedures for recording working time of all type of employees or arrangements. In contrast, in Cyprus it is only applicable to teleworkers while in Hungary there are some exceptions for flexible work arrangement.

Moreover, in Germany, national report informs that the Federal Government is examining if the ruling of the CJEU is to be applied in Germany and if any changes in German laws need to be made. In contrast, in countries like Estonia, Lithuania, Romania or Sweden, national contributions inform that the government and social partners do not agree on the need of establishing additional rules for the enforcement of already existing regulation.

The right to disconnect

At national level, the right to disconnect exists in 13 Member States: Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain.

France, Spain, Belgium and Italy were the first four countries with national legislation on the right to disconnect, introducing this right before the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. The other nine, namely Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Croatia, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, introduced new legislation, amendment to existing national laws, or national guidance to establish this right (this only applies to Ireland) after the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. In addition, in Belgium, new legislation regarding the right to disconnect was introduced in 2022.

The scope the right to disconnect vary significantly from country to country. In 9 Member States the right to disconnect applies to all employees (at least in the private sector), while in 4 it applies only to teleworkers (Cyprus, Greece, Italy, and Slovakia). In France, the right to disconnect applies to all employees in the private sector and only to teleworkers in the public sector. Legislation is usually applicable to employees in both the private and public sector, except for Cyprus and Luxembourg where the right to disconnect currently applies only in the private sector.

In terms of the legal definition, in most Member States the right to disconnect is expressly framed as a right of employees. However, in 7 of those countries, legislation does not clearly define the right to disconnect (Belgium, Cyprus, Spain, France, Italy, Luxembourg and Slovenia). Furthermore, in 4 Member States, the right to disconnect is expressed either as the absence of an obligation on employees to respond to professional communication (Bulgaria and Croatia) or as a duty on employers to refrain from contacting employees during rest periods or to ensure that employees are not at the employer's disposal during such periods (Portugal and Slovenia, respectively). Moreover, in Greece and Ireland, the right to disconnect is expressed as a right to both disengage from work and to not engage in work- related electronic communication.

The approach to implementing the right to disconnect as it is set up in the legislation differs between countries. In 4 Member States (Belgium, France, Luxembourg and Spain), legislation confer to social partners and social dialogue, both at sectoral and company level, a significant role in defining and implementing the right to disconnect. In the remaining 9 countries, the law does not establish specific procedures for implementing the right to disconnect (e.g., Croatia, Greece, Portugal and Slovakia) or leaves its implementation to company polices (Ireland) or individual agreements (Italy).

Adjustment of workload

Legal reforms in Estonia, Finland address solutions for adjusting workloads. Moreover, controversies and debates are identified in relation to the French regulation.

In Estonia, in August 2022, the 'right to request suitable working conditions' was added in Employment Contracts Act § 181, whereby employees can ask for indefinite or full-time contracts, and employers must consider these requests, providing a written reason for refusal within 14 days if denied. From May 2024, it is possible to return to work with a partial workload or lighter tasks after two months of being on sick leave. In the legislation the term is ''working on the basis of a certificate for sick leave Update in Health Insurance Act § 54

In Finland, the Occupational Safety and Health Act 738/2002 has a general clause regarding employer responsibility to protect employee health and safety. The Act was amended in 2023 to include more individualised measures to protect employee health and safety. This amendment was primarily motivated by creating a more sustainable working life for older employees.

In the case of France, the system of the "forfait-jour", whereby employees are paid based on the days worked on annual basis, allow more flexibility for managers and other groups of employees who are trusted by the employer to self-organise their working time or whose jobs does not require them to follow collectively agreed schedules. The Labour Code has included provisions aimed at ensuring that employees' workload is reasonable and properly distributed through collective agreement. However, although there are voices who consider that the system conflicts with European Union law and the case law of the Court of Justice of the EU, it has been favourably received by employees, in particular managers, who thus avoid having to clock in and out. Although some trade unions have challenged the system before the European Committee of Social Rights and the ILO, it is nevertheless well established in the French labour market and well accepted by employees, even though there are regularly disputes settled by the Court of Cassation.

Different ways of considering work/working time

Finally, it is worth pointing that no reform modifying the definition of working time was identified. In this regard, most national contributions highlight that there are no major discussions around the meaning working time as a core element in the regulation of employment relationship and as a main reference or measure of employees' performance, and that main innovations are limited to specific contexts (sectors, job profiles and company-level initiatives).

However, national contributions from six countries highlight general trends towards more flexible work arrangements and shifts towards output-based performance management systems (Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, France, Lithuania, Netherlands and Sweden) but mostly based on company-level examples in specific sectors, such as ICT and finance (Estonia, Lithuania) and usually in the form of informal arrangements not provided in legislation or collective agreements (Netherlands and Sweden). For instance, in the Netherlands although many employees have some degree of autonomy over their work schedules, this is often not established in legislation or collective bargaining. In 2024, only 17.6% of employers included flexibility in working hours in a collective labour agreement or employment contract, while 36.3% allowed it informally[1]. In Sweden, national contribution highlight that both unions and employers acknowledge the extension of such informal practices and their reaction is more to inform their members about possible risks and mitigation strategies (such as checking in with the worker, setting boundaries and such "soft" measures). (Futurion 2023).

Changes in legislation during the pandemic and post-pandemic context on digitalisation and telework

As shown by previous Eurofound research, there were many developments in telework regulation across the EU since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (Eurofound, 2022). This chapter will focus on these new developments exploring legal changes developed from 2021 to 2024. In addition, it also analyses recent legal changes on digitalisation related to working time.

New legislative initiatives

Since 2021, 16 countries have revised or introduced national regulations to address the challenges and opportunities associated with telework and digitalisation (Table 3). These reforms aim to clarify employers' and employees' obligations, modernise outdated legal provisions, and ensure decent working conditions in the context of widespread telework. The legislative approaches adopted vary across countries: some have enacted standalone laws on telework (Austria, Cyprus, Spain and

Portugal), while in most cases countries introduced amendments within their labour codes or existing regulatory frameworks (Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Croatia, Ireland, Lithuania and Romania), and a few have opted for non-legislative agreements (Luxembourg and Norway).

Table 3. Changes in national regulations of telework and digitalisation

Country	Legislative provision	Date of entry into force	Legislative approach	Scope	Social partners' involvement
Austria	Telework Act	1 January 2025	Separate piece of legislation, substituting former "home office" rules	Private-sector employees	Not specified
Bulgaria	Amendment to Labour Code	29 March 2024	Update to Labour Code	All employees	No
Cyprus	Law no. 120(1) 2023 Providing for a Framework for the Organization of Telework	December 2023	Separate piece of legislation	Private and semi-governmental sectors	No
Czech Republic	Act No. 281/2023 Coll. amending Labour Code and other laws	1 October 2023	Amendment to Labour Code, law no. 281/2022 and law no. 262/2006	All employees	No
Denmark	Working Environment Act	1 April 2022	Update to existing legislation	All employees	No
Estonia	Update to Occupational Health and Safety Act §12	19 November 2022	Update to existing legislation	All employers and employees	No
Spain	Spanish Law 10/2021 on Remote Work	9 July 2021	Separate piece of legislation based on the Royal Decree-law 28/2020	Private sector	No
Greece	Law 4808/2021, Art. 67, on telework, amending Law 3846/2010, Art. 5	19 June 2021	Amendment to previous legislation	Private employees	Yes
Croatia	Amendment to Labour Act	1 January 2023	Amendment to previous legislation	Public servant in the state	No

				(government) sector	
Ireland	Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023	2023 (operational in 2024)	Separate piece of legislation	All employees, especially women	No
Lithuania	Law No XIV-1189 of 28 June 2024, amending Labour Code	1 August 2022	Amendment to Labour Code	Employees with family responsibilities and all employees	No
Luxembourg	Convention of 20 October 2020 on teleworking	2 February 2021	Social partner agreement (non-legislative)	Employees under Labour Code, with some exclusions	Yes
Norway	Amendment to FOR-2002-07-05-715	1 July 2022	Amendment to existing regulation	All home-based workers	No
Poland	Amendment to Labour Code	26 April 2023	Amendment to Labour Code	Employees with standard contracts	No
Portugal	Law 83/2021 amending telework regime	1 January 2022	Amendment to Labour Code	Private and public sector	Yes
Romania	Law no. 241/2023 (Art. 1181)	July 2023	New article in Labour Code	Employees with children under 11	No

Source: Questionnaire for the Comparative Analytical Report (CAR): Working Time in the context of increasing flexible working in the aftermath the pandemic. Network of Eurofound Correspondents

Main topics introduced in legislation on telework and digitalisation

For this section, 5 key regulatory dimensions were considered, namely platform work, algorithmic management and artificial intelligence (AI) in relation to working time aspects, telework regime (in particular, right to request telework), employment conditions of telework (cost compensation and geographical mobility) and organisation of work and working time.

As shown in Table 4 below, in relation to telework, the telework regime (right to request) has been the dimension most addressed in recent legal reforms (11 countries), followed by changes in certain employment conditions (cost compensation and, to a lesser extent, geographical mobility, 7 countries) and organisation of work and working time (1 country). Regarding digitalisation of work, the report identifies 4 countries that have developed new regulation related to platform work, algorithmic management and artificial intelligence (AI) in the workplace.

Below we provide further details of the policy reforms developed withing each dimension.

Table 4. Main topics introduced in recent legislation on digitalisation and telework

Topic	Countries
Platform work, algorithmic management and AI in relation to working time aspects	Greece, Croatia, Malta and Portugal
Telework regime (right to request)	Cyprus, Greece, Croatia, Spain, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal and Romania
Employment conditions of telework	Austria, France, Croatia, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Portugal
Organisation of work and working time	Spain

Source: Questionnaire for the Comparative Analytical Report (CAR): Working Time in the context of increasing flexible working in the aftermath the pandemic. Network of Eurofound Correspondents

Platform work, algorithmic management and AI in relation to working time aspects

Algorithmic management refers to algorithmic systems that use tracked data and other information to organize, assign, monitor, supervise and evaluate work (Rani et al., 2024). These systems may rely or digital technologies or on AI-based technologies or model that makes automated or semi-automated decisions or provides information for decision-makers on worker management-related questions (EU-OSHA, 2024). Algorithmic management or AI based worker management is key feature of digital labour platforms. However, they are also increasing used in different activities such used traditional manufacturing (EU-OSHA, 2024).

Previous research has identified several risks associated to algorithmic management systems such as surveillance intensification, which in turn leads to high stress levels or increase in work intensity and the speed of work leading to unpredictability in work schedules (EU-OSHA, 2024). There are also several risks specifically related to working time. For instance, some studies have acknowledged the extension of unpaid working time in digital platforms where workers work on-demand and paid on piece-rate basis (Pulignano and Marà, 2021) or have pointed to a radical individualisation of working time practices which makes it difficult to enforce regulation on working time (Piasna, 2023).

Following on from this evidence, it is crucial to analyse how European countries regulate the organisation of working time of teleworkers. At EU level, the key regulation governing the use of personal data, which is also relevant for addressing challenges raised by algorithmic management systems, is the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This regulation prohibits decisions based solely on automated processing and establishes a series of other rights which have implications in the context of algorithmic management systems. Moreover, in March 2024, EU employment and social affairs ministers approved the provisional agreement made between the European Council and the European Parliament on the proposal for a directive on improving working conditions for platform workers. The approved text includes a chapter on algorithmic management that introduces a set of rights applicable to all people providing work through platforms

According to a recent Eurofound article (Eurofound, 2024c), the vast majority of European countries still do not have a national regulation in place regarding algorithmic management and platform work. The information gathered by the contributions from the Network of Eurofound Correspondents confirm this. According to it, there are only five countries that have begun to address the implications of algorithmic scheduling and control over working hours or related themes: Greece, Croatia, Malta, Portugal and Spain.

Greece and Portugal have introduced initial legal references to the use of AI tools in relation to time management and employer oversight, signalling the early stage of legislative engagement with algorithmic work environments

In Croatia, national contribution informs about a 2022 amendment to the Labour Act concerning platform workers with irregular schedules at employers' request. New article 221 provides that these employment contracts are required to specify details about flexible work hours, a defined timeframe for employer requests, a guaranteed minimum amount of paid work, and the employee's right to decline tasks without facing penalties if noticed outside the specified timeframe.

In Malta and Spain, legal reforms have set up a right to algorithmic transparency for platform workers.

Telework regime: right to access and/or objective conditions to be eligible for telework

The benefits of telework for both employers and employees largely depend on the fairness and quality of telework. Recent survey data from Eurofound highlights a widening gap between the number of employees who are able to telework and those who wish to do so (Eurofound, 2025). That evidence highlights the need for the establishment of clear and objective procedures in granting access to telework.

Prior to the pandemic crisis, most EU legal systems followed the 'voluntary principle' set out in the EU Framework Agreement on Telework. Thus, an employee's access to telework was based on an agreement between the employee and the employer, usually following a request by the employee. Moreover, most EU legal frameworks required that the telework regime be set out in the employee's contract of employment or in an individual written agreement (EU-OSHA, 2021b; Eurofound, 2022b).

Since the outbreak of the pandemic crisis, the right of workers to request and gain access to teleworking arrangements have been the subject of debates at policy level, and among social partners, and scholars (Sanz de Miguel et al., 2025; Cooper and Baird, 2015; Koslowski et al., 2021; Chung, 2022). Moreover, as mentioned earlier, at EU level, Article 9 of the Directive (EU) 2019/1158 on work-life balance for parents and carers set up that 'Member States shall take the necessary measures to ensure that workers with children up to a specified age, which shall be at least eight years, and carers, have the right to request flexible working arrangements for caring purposes'.

Previous Eurofound research found that in the pandemic context, there were only three countries (France, Lithuania and Portugal (the latter modified in 2021) where does legislation provide that an employer's decision following a telework request must be justified or motivated, particularly when it affects workers with care needs (Eurofound, 2022).The information gathered by the contributions from the Network of Eurofound Correspondents shows a dramatic increase in the number of countries that currently regulate the right to request telework. Since 2021, the following 11 EU countries have set up new regulation on the right to request telework: Cyprus, Greece, Croatia, Spain, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal and Romania.

In Ireland, Portugal and Romania legal reforms provide a right to request telework which is applicable to all workers. Thus, all employees have a right to request telework and to receive a justification from their employer where the latter refuses such request

In Greece, Croatia, Spain, Hungary, Lithuania, legal reforms have set up a right to request telework which is only applicable to certain categories of workers (pregnant employee, workers with care or work-life balance needs and/or workers with disability). In the case of Italy, legal reform has strengthened the right to flexible work arrangements for certain workers' categories (Italy)

Moreover, there are 2 countries where new legislation has provided a right to telework for certain categories of workers. In Romania, a legal amendment introduced in 2023 stipulates that employees with children under the age of 11 in their care are entitled to work from home or telework for four days per month, upon request, unless the nature or type of their work prevents such arrangements (Art. 118 was introduced by Law no. 241/2023, published in the Official Gazette no. 673 on 21 July 2023). In Portugal, a 2023 amendment to the Labour Code, enacted by Law 13/2023, stipulates that employers cannot oppose employees' requests to telework if they are victims of domestic violence or have caregiving responsibilities for dependent children or other relatives with disabilities or chronic illnesses (Art. 166).

Finally, it is worth mentioning the case of Cyprus. In this country, new telework law approved in 2023 provides that that in the event that the employee is a person with disabilities, the employer shall take appropriate measures to ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided in accordance with the provisions of Article 9 of the Persons with Disabilities Act. Accordingly, the right to telework can be covered as an accommodating measure under the duty of the employer to offer a reasonable accommodation for persons with disability.

Employment conditions of telework

Several countries have introduced specific provisions regulating at least three aspects of employment conditions of teleworkers.

First, an aspect which has been increasingly addressed in legislation is the provision of equipment and compensation for costs incurred by teleworkers. When Eurofound mapped this dimension in 2021, it identified that six countries approved legal reformes which addressed this aspecto during the pandemic: Austria, Latvia, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain. The information gathered by the contributions from the Network of Eurofound Correspondents shows that from 2021 to 2024, France, Croatia, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Portugal have also included new or updated (Portugal) legal clauses on cost compensation. Currently, there are 19 countries, where employers are legally obligated to cover these expenses, such as those for equipment and telecommunications (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechia, Greece, Germany, Spain, Italy, Croatia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, and Slovakia). The approach for establishing compensation levels widely differ across countries. In some countries (Austria, Czechia, Greece, Hungary, Luxembourg, Poland and Portugal) legal provisions typically involve lump sum contributions, or the reimbursement of proven costs or fixed hourly rates. In other countries, compensation details must be agreed upon between employer and employee and included in the telework agreement (Belgium, Greece, Croatia, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Slovenia, Slovakia). Five, there are also countries (Bulgaria, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, and Malta) where there is lack of clear rules on compensation methods.

Second, there is one country (Austria) which reports under this dimension (employment conditions) new legal provisions that acknowledge a broad range of teleworking locations, from secondary residences to co-working spaces, thus reflecting new spatial dynamics of remote work.

Finally, another aspect identified is the regulation of remote work from countries different from the employers' premises (i.e. cross-border telework). Since July 2023, a new regulatory framework is provided by the Framework Agreement on Cross-border telework, which has been signed by 22 Member States[2]. Reference to this new legal is only reported in the national contributions of Ireland and Luxembourg. Under this framework, a request can be made to apply the Social Security legislation of the Member State of the registered office or place of business of the employer, provided that cross-border telework carried out in their Member State of residence is less than 50% of the total working time working remotely[3].

Organisation of work and working time

The relationship between telework and working time has been extensively explored. Telework also has the potential to improve work–life balance by facilitating family life, helping workers cope with the demands of their personal lives, increasing leisure time and increasing workers' autonomy in the organisation of working time to suit their preferences and needs (Eurofound and ILO, 2017). However, telework has often been associated with informal overtime (working from home in addition to the normal schedule in the office) due to difficulties in coping with work overload in the context of flexibility as regards time and place of work.

At EU level, there is not specific regulation on working time organisation and telework beyond the provision he EU Framework Agreement on Telework, which sets up under article 9 that the teleworker manages the organisation of their working time.

At national level, previous research has found that general legislation on working time also applies to teleworkers (European Commission, 2024). Moreover, Eurofound previous study on telework regulation found that there are 10 countries in which legislation establishes that teleworkers can organise their working time themselves to some extent (Czechia, Hungary,7 Italy (only for agile/smart work), Lithuania, the Netherlands, Romania, Slovakia (modified in 2021) and Spain (modified in 2020)) or assigns autonomy to teleworkers to organise their breaks and rest periods during working time (Bulgaria and France).

According to the contributions from the Network of Eurofound Correspondents, there is only country that reports changes in relation to telework and working time patterns. In Spain, Law 10/2021 establishes clear guidelines regarding working time patterns, breaks, and rest periods for remote workers. The provisions, included in Articles 13 (Flexible Working Hours) and 14 (Working Time Recording), ensure that teleworkers maintain proper work-life balance and are protected from overwork, while adhering to the same standards as on-site employees. Thus, Article 13 stresses that teleworkers have the right to organize their working time flexibly, as agreed in their remote work contract, provided they respect total working hours and rest periods (overwork practices). The article also stresses that flexibility must comply with labour laws, including daily and weekly rest requirements, while fostering work-life balance.

Sectoral level collective bargaining

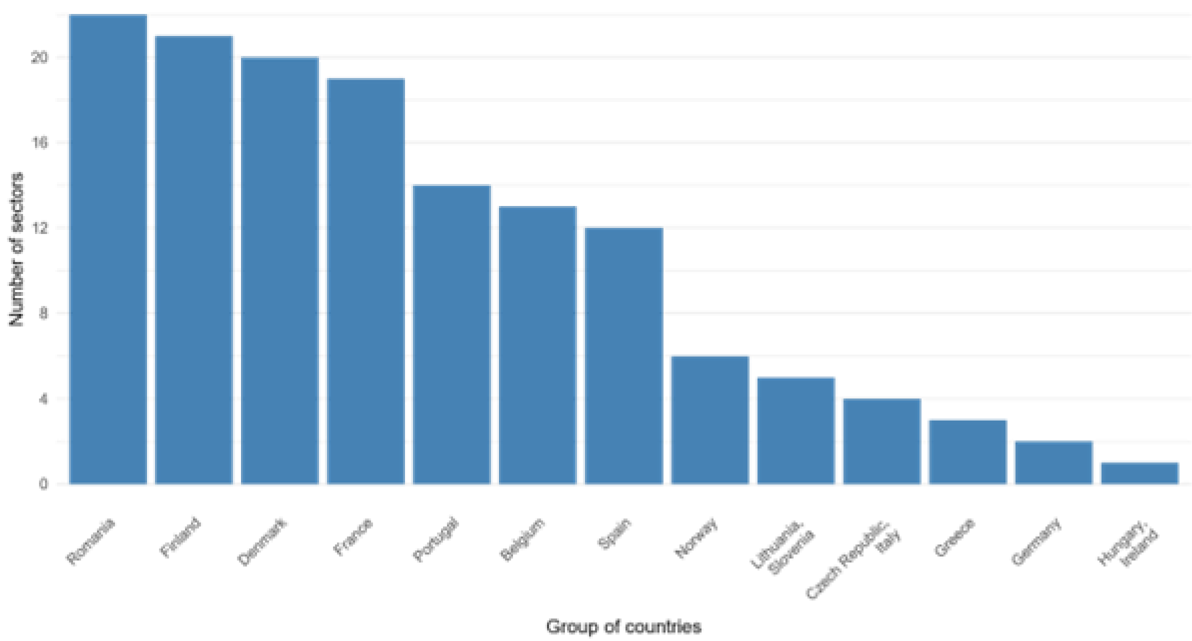
Working time

Overview of collective agreements regulating working time in Member States and sectors

A sample of 161 sectoral collective agreements with provisions on flexible working time from 26 Member States was selected based on information provided by the Network of Eurofound Correspondents (Table A1 in the annex). The agreements selected are found mainly in countries where collective bargaining traditionally is strong or where sectoral-level bargaining is predominant.

Figure 1 shows the number of sectoral collective agreements with flexible work provisions in each country. It mainly includes information of countries where sectoral collective bargaining a prominent role. However, some countries where sectoral bargaining is scarce—Czechia (public sector), Ireland (public sector), Lithuania (arts, sports, recreation, and education), Romania (finance and insurance), and Slovenia (real estate sector)—are represented in the sample with at least a few sectoral agreements covering telework.

Figure 1. Number of sectors covered by sectoral agreements with working time provisions by selected Member State



Note: *Some data is not available or missing in Poland, Estonia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Latvia, Netherlands, Malta, Sweden, Croatia*

Source: *Contributions from the Network of Eurofound Correspondents*

Sectors with predominance of flexible working time provisions

Based on the sample presented in Figure 2, collective agreements with flexible work provisions are mainly found in five sectors: energy (D), health and social work (R), finance (L), transport (H), and manufacturing (C). However, most of the agreements within these sectors regulate only a small number of aspects related to flexible work. Out of 36 agreements, 16 contain only one provision—usually access to telework or working time flexibility. Other 12 include two provisions, often adding provisions on breaks or rests. Only a few agreements regulate more than two aspects, with the manufacturing sector showing the broadest scope. In France and Portugal, some sectors (e.g., finance and transport), also cover work–life balance and the right to disconnect.

Figure 2. Number of selected Member States with collective agreements on working time by sector

Note: *Some data is not available or missing in Poland, Estonia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Latvia, Netherlands, Malta, Sweden, Croatia*

Source: *Contributions from the Network of Eurofound Correspondents*

Content of flexible working time provisions

This section presents an overview of the content of the sectoral agreements dealing with flexible work. Selected examples illustrate how sectors in specific countries are addressing various aspects of employment and working conditions in flexible work arrangements, focusing on:

- Access to flexible work arrangements.
- Organisation of working time and the right to disconnect (breaks and rest, flexibility, work-life balance, management of workload, recording of working time, and the right to disconnect)
- Others (compensatory mechanisms)

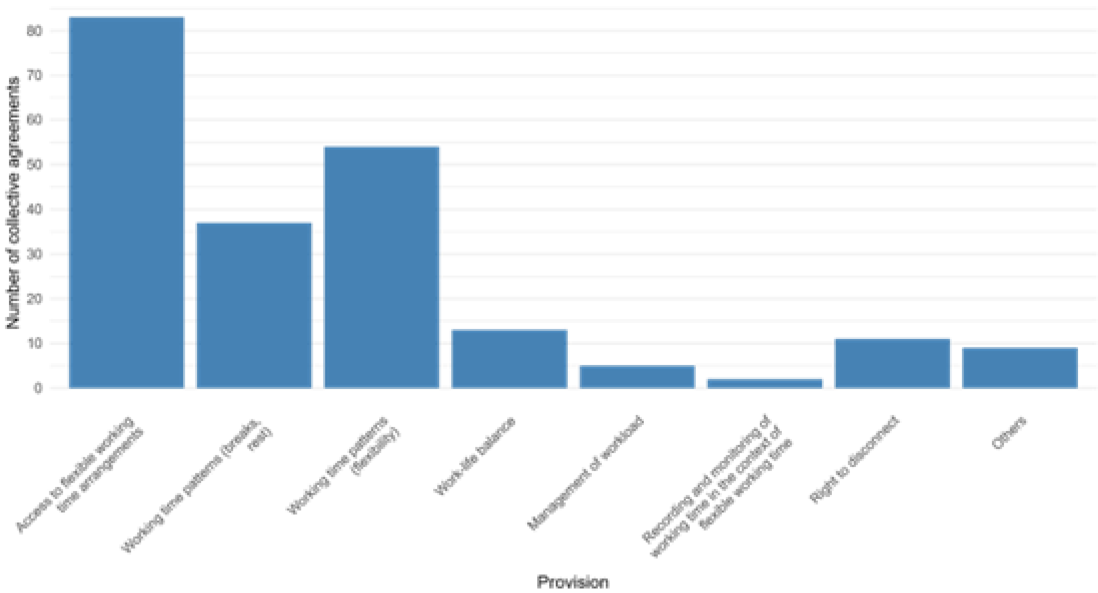
Access to flexible working time

Access to flexible work is the most regulated aspect across agreements, but in most cases the provisions only set out general principles or procedures. Most defer the issue to company-level or individual agreements—via local negotiation (e.g. Germany–public administration, Denmark–industry, Spain–catering) or individual requests (e.g. Romania–healthcare, Portugal–journalism, Netherlands–social work).

Almost no agreement explicitly grants the right to flexible working time to either all employees or those whose roles are deemed suitable, except for two agreements. Sectoral agreement for the metal industry in France (metal industry) allow workers with autonomy to work flexibly up to 218 days/year, and in Portugal (journalism sector, Box 1) schedules with different start and end times for daily work periods are allowed, provided the daily limit is not exceeded.

Similarly, the right to request flexible working arrangements is seldom addressed in flexible working provisions despite most agreements containing at least a reference regarding access to flexible work arrangements. While in Portugal (journalism sector) and Romania (healthcare sector) the employer is required to respond to such requests within a reasonable period of time and provide rea sons for any refusal, the Netherlands' agreement for the social sector refers to national legislation that mandates it.

Figure 3. Number of collective agreements regulating on flexible working time by type of provision



Notably, only the Portuguese agreement for the journalism sector specifies an enforceable right to telework for specific groups (Box 1). By contrast, the Romanian agreement provides universal access to request individualised work schedules but only makes explicit mention of workers on caregiver leave and mandates simplified procedures in the case of urgent family situations.

Box 1. Portugal – Collective Agreement for the Journalism Sector

Employers must not refuse teleworking requests submitted in writing by the following groups: student-workers; pregnant workers; workers with certified poor health; workers with children under six years old or children with disabilities or chronic illness (where the other parent does not have the same right); workers caring for dependent ascending family members; and workers with disabilities or chronic illnesses. Any refusal must be justified in writing.

Source*: Contributions from the Network of Eurofound Correspondents*

Organisation of working time and the right to disconnect

With regard to working time patterns, most agreements focus more on flexibility in working hours and scheduling than on the regulation of breaks and rest periods.

The Norwegian sectoral agreement for state employees is the only one with a full “flexitime band” system, by which employees can choose their daily schedules. It defines core working hours during which presence is mandatory (09:00-14:30h) and flexible working time (06:00-09:00h and 14:30-21:00h). By individual agreement, flexitime may also be used on Saturdays, with up to five hours worked between 07:00 and 18:00.

Other forms of regulating working time have been identified. The Finnish sectoral agreement for government employees relies on a goal-oriented model based on individual responsibility, and the Portuguese sectoral agreement for journalists allows flexible daily schedules to adapt employees’ workday to “personal or professional needs”. Some agreements introduced working time averaging systems. France’s national agreement for the metallurgy sector introduces both a multi-week working time arrangement and annual hour/day packages (forfait annuel), which allow companies to average hours over up to 12 months. The implementation of these schemes sometimes requires company-level negotiations.

Some agreements require a further companylevel agreement before the flexible arrangements they provide for can actually be implemented. These are the cases of Denmark’s industrial collective agreement, which allows for variable weekly working hours and compressed workweeks (e.g., four-day weeks with extended daily hours), and Spain’s Collective Agreement for the Catering Sector (Box 2).

Box 2. Spain – Collective Catering Agreement

> Companies can distribute the annual working hours irregularly to adapt to operational demands, provided that minimum rest periods are respected and subject to consultation with workers' representatives.
>
> Shift work with flexibility in scheduling to meet service requirements is allowed. Employers and employee representatives can negotiate specific schedules, considering operational peaks and employee needs.

Source: *Contributions from the Network of Eurofound Correspondents*

Provisions on breaks and rest periods are rarely included in sectoral agreements on flexible working and usually refer to national legislation or require prior consultation with worker representatives (e.g. Spain–catering, Romania–healthcare, Netherlands–social employment). Similarly, the right to disconnect is almost never explicitly recognised, and no agreements include specific provisions for its enforcement. References to work–life balance are also virtually absent, with only one isolated mention identified in Romania’s healthcare sector.

Others

Although rare, some compensatory mechanisms for exceeding standard working time have been identified. For instance, the Portuguese journalists’ agreement permits local agreements on paid exemptions from working time limits (Box 3), and the Swedish public sector agreement establishes reductions in standard weekly working hours based on the employee’s exposure to night shifts.

Box 3. Sweden – Public Sector

Permanent night-shift workers have their standard weekly working hours reduced from 40 hours to 36 hours.

Employees with rotating schedules that include at least 30% night shifts have their standard week reduced to 34 hours 20 minutes.

Those with rotating schedules that include at least 10% night shifts have their standard week reduced to 36 hours 20 minutes.

Source*: Contributions from the Network of Eurofound Correspondents*

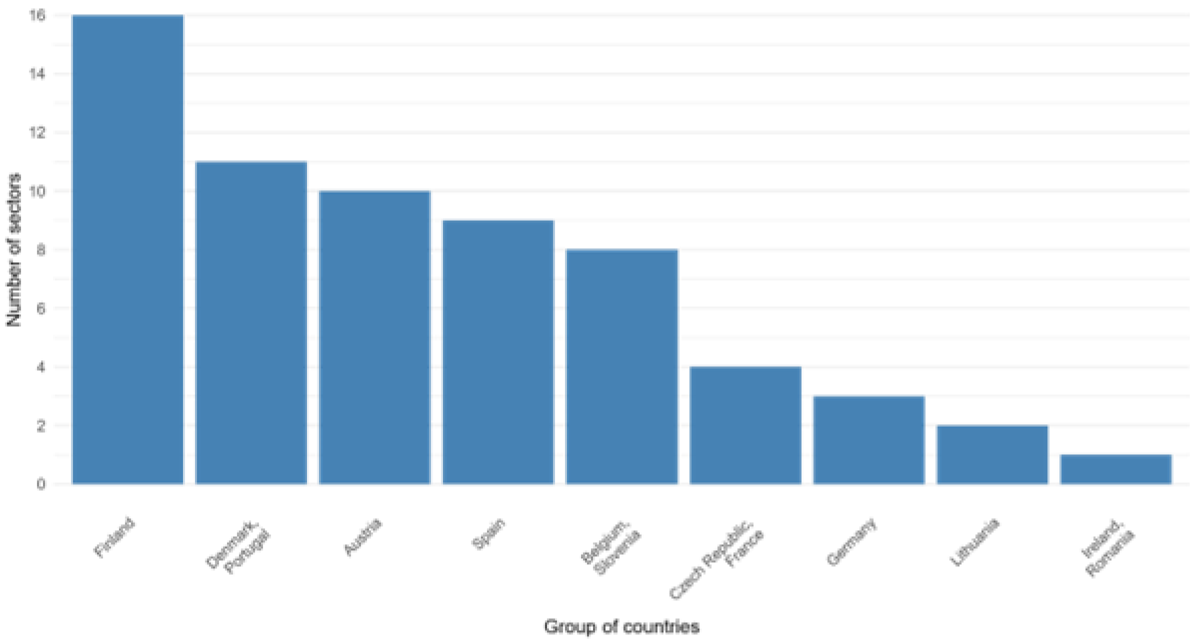
Telework

Overview of collective agreements regulating on telework in Member States and sectors

A sample of 98 sectoral collective agreements with provisions on telework from 26 Member States was selected based on information provided by the Network of Eurofound Correspondents (Table A2). The agreements selected are found mainly in countries where collective bargaining traditionally is strong or where sectoral-level bargaining is predominant.

Figure 4 shows the number of sectors covered by agreements with telework provisions in each country. It does not include information on countries that generally exhibit a weak role of sectorial collective bargaining, although some —Czechia (the public sector), Ireland (the public sector), Lithuania (arts, sports, recreation, and education), Romania (finance and insurance), and Slovenia (the Real Estate sector) are represented in the sample with at least a few sectors covering telework.

Figure 4. Number of sectors covered by sectoral agreements with telework provisions by selected Member State



Note*: Some data is not available or missing in Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, and Sweden*

Source*: Contributions from the Network of Eurofound Correspondents*

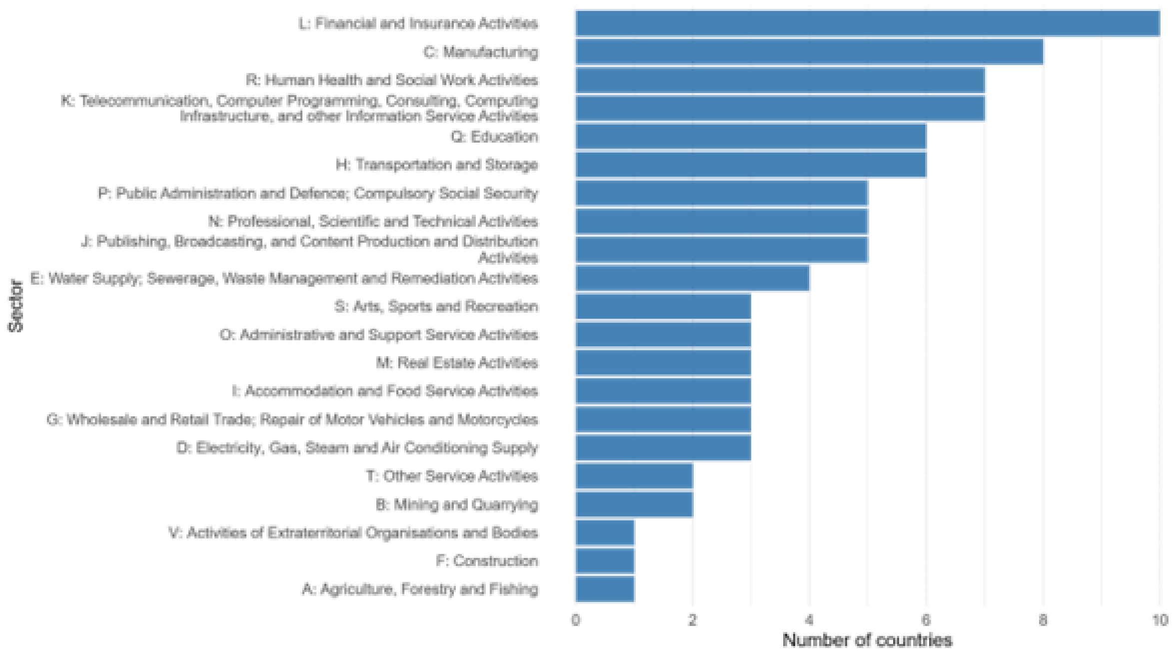
Sectors with predominance of telework provisions

Based on the sample in Figure 4, collective agreements containing provisions on telework are mainly found in financial and insurance, as well as manufacturing sectors (Figure 5). In each of these sectors, sectoral agreements referring to telework exist in 8 to 10 Member States.

In the manufacturing sector, telework appears to be more extensively regulated in Portugal, Germany, and Finland, with provisions covering working time patterns, recording and monitoring of working time, the right to disconnect, and access to telework (except Germany).

A similar pattern is observed in the financial and insurance sector. Portugal, Finland, and Germany tend to regulate more comprehensively than other countries, more frequently addressing work–life balance and economic compensation. Notably, countries like Romania—through non-binding recommendations—and Czechia also include some telework provisions in this sector, particularly related to access and working time.

Figure 5. Number of selected Member States with collective agreements on telework by sector



Note: *Some data is not available or missing in Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, and Sweden*

Source: *Contributions from the Network of Eurofound Correspondents*

Content of telework provisions

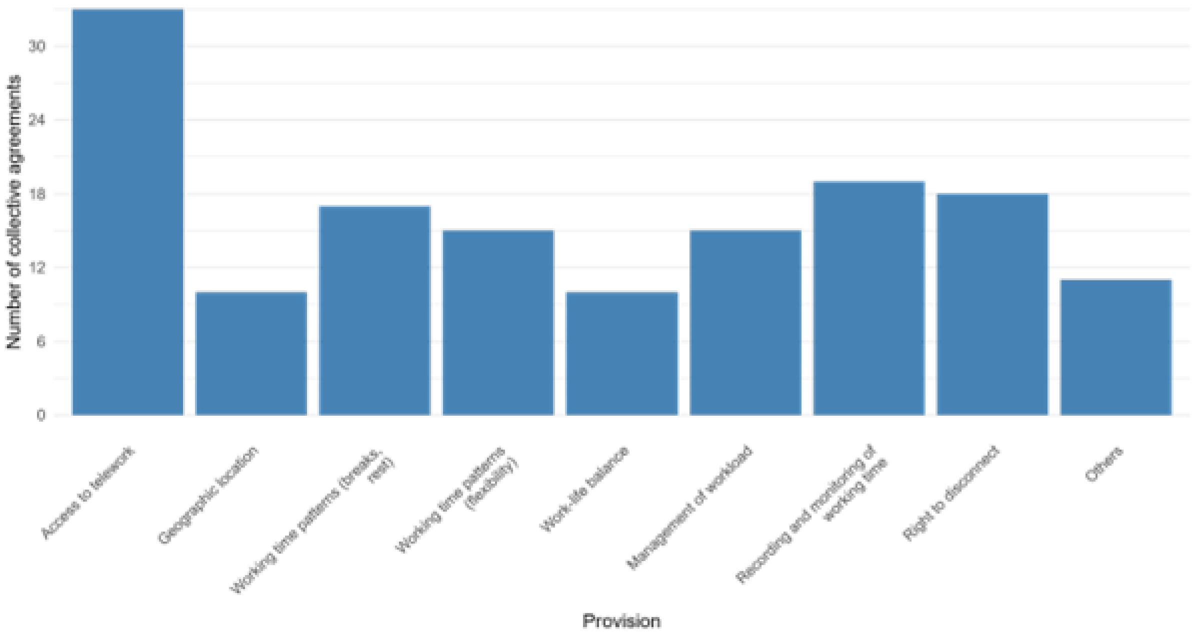
This section provides an overview of the content of sectoral agreements addressing telework. Selected examples illustrate how different sectors in specific countries regulate various aspects of employment and working conditions in telework arrangements, focusing on:

- Telework regime (access to telework)
- Employment conditions (geographic location)
- Organisation of working time and the right to disconnect (breaks and rest, flexibility, work-life balance, management of workload, recording and monitoring of working time, and the right to disconnect)
- Others (occupational health and economic compensation)

Telework regime

Most sectoral agreements on telework analysed include provisions concerning access to telework arrangements (Figure 6). However, only two explicitly grant the right to telework—at least for a minimum number of days. The German public banking agreement allows employees to perform up to 40% of their weekly working hours as “mobile work.” Similarly, the Belgian agreement in the commercial aviation sector (see Box 5) establishes a right to telework at least two days per week for employees in non-operational roles, with eligible functions defined at the company level. Notably, Collective Agreement for the Metal Sector in Portugal grants access to telework or preferential access to telework for specific groups of workers (e.g., workers with disabilities or caregiving duties). By contrast, the sectoral agreement in Bulgaria restricts telework to periods of national emergency.

Figure 6. Number of collective agreements regulating on telework by telework provision



Source: *Contributions from the Network of Eurofound Correspondents*

A right to request telework is also mentioned in France and Romania, but only in France the employer must justify its refusal when there is an active teleworking policy at the company. In the Romanian agreement, employers retain wider discretion in granting access.

Employment conditions

Geographic location remains largely unregulated in collective agreements (Figure 6), with exceptions in Germany (manufacturing and public administration), Finland (water supply, construction, and publishing), France (professional, scientific and technical activities), and Portugal (water supply, publishing, and financial activities). These agreements typically require that the telework location(s) be specified in writing. Notable exceptions are the French agreement, which includes a recommendation related to social security and tax liability for cross-border telework, and the Romanian case, that grants employers' discretion over approving telework location.

Organisation of working time and the right to disconnect

Provisions concerning the organisation of working time are not among the most frequently addressed aspects in the sectoral agreements analysed. A notable exception is the agreement in the French technical and consultancy sector, which regulates daily rest and breaks for hybrid workers. Other agreements, such as the Danish Framework Agreement on Telework and Home Working for the municipal sector, establish formal equivalence between the working time arrangements of remote and on-site employees, leaving flexibility to local bargaining. Similarly, issues such as breaks, rest, and flexible working arrangements are often delegated to company bargaining (e.g., Portugal–metal and machinery manufacturing, Romania–financial sector, and Finland–health and social work).

The right to disconnect is explicitly recognised in agreements for France's technical and consultancy sector, Spain's travel agencies, and Romania's financial sector. The French agreement requires defining specific availability slots (Box 4). In the Romanian financial sector, a set of recommendations recognises the right to disconnect "at the end of the working schedule […], except in cases where overtime is performed, based on an agreement between employees and employers".

Work-life balance was seldom addressed in the sample of collective agreements analysed, with some agreements merely mentioning it without concrete measures. Only in the Spanish collective agreement, it was directly linked to the right to disconnect.

Finally, the recording and monitoring of working time is typically regulated through the explicit extension of existing rules applicable to on-site workers. The responsibility is often delegated to companies or assigned to employees (e.g., Portugal's metal sector).

Box 4. France - Collective Agreement for Technical Design Offices, Engineering Consultancies, and Consultancy Firms

Hybrid working is voluntary for both the employee and the employer. Thus, when the former informs the latter of his or her wish to benefit from it, the employer may, after examination, accept or refuse his or her request. A refusal must be justified when access to hybrid working is open in the company, by collective agreement or charter, and the requesting employee fulfils the eligibility conditions. […] The employee may refuse to switch to hybrid working, which is not a reason for terminating the employment contract as long as it was not a condition of employment.

Employees working under a hybrid work organisation scheme are entitled to a break of at least 45 minutes... cannot be taken contiguously with the daily rest period of 11 consecutive hours.

Companies determine, by company agreement, charter or written agreement between the employer and the employee, a time slot of availability during which the employee can be reached by the employer. Outside this time, the employee cannot be criticised for not having answered a call or a work email.

Source*: Contributions from the Network of Eurofound Correspondents*

Others

Some sectoral agreements include provisions on occupational health and safety (OSH) for teleworkers, mainly addressing risk assessments and the employer's duty to provide ergonomic equipment. A few also cover psychosocial risks—for example, French sectoral agreement establishes an annual workload review, promotes social contact, and advises limiting telework to 20% of working time. Similarly, Norway's retail sector stresses social interaction, although without introducing any specific measures.

Economic compensation for telework is likewise infrequently addressed, with exceptions in Belgium (airlines), Spain (travel agencies), the Netherlands (government), and Romania (financial sector), where agreements either set fixed amounts or require employers to cover related expenses.

Box 5. Belgium - Collective Agreement for the Commercial aviation

Employees in non-operational positions are entitled to telework at least two working days per week. [...]

An employee who in a month on average at least one full working day per week teleworking on a voluntary basis is entitled that month to a telework allowance of EUR 20.

An employee who is required by the employer is required to telework, shall be entitled to a monthly telework allowance which is at least equal to the then fixed maximum amount exempt

Source: *Contributions from the Network of Eurofound Correspondents*

Company level collective bargaining

A sample of 15 company-level collective agreements included in national contributions provides insights of the current regulation of flexible working time and teleworking in the corresponding countries. The agreements selected were mostly negotiated in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The selection also includes companies' internal polices for those cases in which collective agreements could not be identified (e.g. Latvia—public administration).

The most prominent sectors among company agreements are telecommunications, and finance and insurance activities, followed by the public administration.

Telework regime: right to request telework

The most common provisions in the sample refer to the frequency and eligibility for telework. In most cases, provisions exist for the minimum number of days for on-site work and their allocation.

Overall, access to telework is generally granted to all employees whose tasks are compatible with telework, subject to agreement with line managers and/or individual telework arrangements (Cyprus, Estonia, Denmark, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Spain). Notably, only one selected company agreement in Italy grants employees full flexibility to choose their workplace without restrictions. Similarly, Malta's public administration guidelines allow employees to telework for up to 20% of their weekly hours, while additional remote work hours may require a valid reason (e.g., childcare, dependent care, or medical/humanitarian needs). In Cyprus, employees follow a hybrid model, working two days on-site and the remaining days remotely or in the field (Box 6). In Latvia, guidelines for flexible work organization in the public sector specify that institutions should determine not only which roles are eligible for telework, but also which physical workplaces are suitable.

In some cases, access to telework is subject to a minimum tenure and is not available to new hires (Cyprus and Estonia). In a company-level agreement from France, apprentices are eligible for telework, while trainees are not—though they may be granted a one-off remote working day with managerial approval. At this company, telework is also restricted to employees working more than 60% of a full-time schedule. An agreement in Estonia requires prior online training on telework regulation and occupational health.

With regard to access to telework, only an agreement in Lithuania (financial sector) explicitly requires employers to justify a refusal to an employees' request, in writing.

Reversibility provisions appear in agreements in France and Ireland. A French financial company allows managers to require on-site work in cases of inadequate autonomy, behavioural issues, or operational needs. In Ireland, a company policy mandating office return led to one of the first legal cases under the 2023 Work Life Balance Act (Box 20), though the claim was unsuccessful.

Regarding cross-border telework, two company-level agreements include specific provisions. An Estonian ICT company allows employees to work from Schengen countries for up to 30 days per year, subject to managerial approval. In contrast, the agreement at the French Allianz subsidiary permits telework only from the employee’s primary residence or another private location, explicitly prohibiting telework from abroad or third-party locations.

> Employees are working two times per week at the premises of employers and the rest from home or other remote location or on the field conducting external audit. Hybrid arrangement is coordinated by the heads of departments and is performed rotationally on a weekly based and through the desk reservation system set by the company. Depending on the needs and development of projects undertaken, employees have the flexibility for changes of initial weekly work schedules.

Box 6. Cyprus – Financial and insurance activities

Source: *Contributions from the Network of Eurofound Correspondents*

> On 25 July 2023, TikTok announced a planned return to office for all employees effective from 9 October 2023. The announcement confirmed that all “employees will be required to work in the office a minimum of three days per week, unless otherwise dictated by local laws or regulations”. In terms of providing a basis for the RTO policy, the announcement stated: “The Company believes that in-person collaboration inspires creativity and creates irreplaceable value.” At that time, exceptions to the mandatory 3 days in office were only being considered on the basis of providing reasonable accommodation in respect of a disability and were no longer being granted on the basis of individual exception requests (as they had been previously).

Box 7. Ireland – Telecommunications, ICT

Source: *Contributions from the Network of Eurofound Correspondents*

Cost compensation

Provisions on equipment and cost-compensation for teleworkers are reported in the agreements included for Denmark, Lithuania and Spain. The provision of equipment is limited to the necessary tools and equipment to carry out telework. The company agreement for the Lithuanian financial institution specifies that the reimbursement of costs or additional expenses incurred by teleworkers only applies to those cases where telework is carried out at the employer’s request, except in emergency situations.

Flexibility

Flexible working time provisions are reported in collective agreements of seven countries. Flexitime schemes allowing employees to decide on the entry and exit times within a set timeframe are the most common arrangements (Denmark, France, Portugal, Netherlands and Spain). Agreements for France, Denmark and Spain stipulate ‘core’ working hours or time slots during which teleworkers are required to be available, while allowing flexibility in the allocation of the rest of their working hours to accommodate to their personal needs and preferences (Box 8).

In one agreement (Malta's public service guidelines on telework), flexibility in working time and place is granted only to employees who work from home on a regular basis, defined as more than 20% of their total working hours. These guidelines specify that these workers can 'work their remote working hours or part thereof outside their normal office hours, in agreement with the respective Director/head and with the approval of the Permanent Secretary.' The document further states that whilst working remotely, employees have full flexibility regarding where they carry out their work.

> To promote a good work-life balance, the agreement imposes periods of availability, to be agreed between the employee or their team and their manager. For employees with flexible hours, whose working day is organised within the range of 7.30 am to 7 pm, their availability periods include, as a minimum, the periods from 9.45 am to 11.45 am and 2 pm to 4.15 pm. Managers on a fixed-day contract set their availability periods in consultation with their manager, within the 7.30am to 7pm time frame. They also set periods of unavailability during which they cannot be contacted, except in an emergency. The company also insists on lunch breaks being taken

Box 8. France – Financial and insurance activities

Source: *Contributions from the Network of Eurofound Correspondents*

Additionally, national contribution for Germany point to recent developments in collective bargaining at company level. New rules on working time flexibility agreed in Lufthansa framework agreement allow cabin crew workers to voluntarily join a seasonal summer working team. The summer working team works more hours during the busy summer months and receiving higher remuneration for their efforts. In their 2024 collective bargaining round, social partners additionally agreed on rules to improve predictability of employees' work schedules and free-time (including ten days off each month). The latest agreement runs till the end of 2026 (Lesch and Eckle, 2024a). Similarly, the recent 2023 bargaining rounds at the railway operator Deutsche Bahn resulted in the introduction of new flexible working time models. In April 2024, the company also agreed to reduce the working hours of shift workers from 38 to 35 hours gradually without wage loses (starting January 2026 with 37 hours, January 2027: 36 hours, January 2028: 35.5 hours and January 2029: 35 hours). However, the agreement also include that workers could choose their preferred number of weekly hours within a range of 35 to 40 hours, with each hour being valued at 2.7% of their hourly wages (Lesch and Eckle, 2024b).

Work-life balance provisions

The company level agreements included in Lithuania, Netherlands and Spain explicitly acknowledge the employees' right to request flexible working time arrangements for work-life balance purposes. The agreement for the financial institution in Lithuania provides that flexible work arrangements shall be determined by agreement between the employee and the Employer, considering the needs of the employee. Employees are entitled to request reduced working hours (Box 9).

Upon returning from childcare leave, a staff member may request to work part-time temporarily for up to three months, with pay adjusted proportionally to the hours worked. The employee can opt to work up to half of their previous hours. The specifics of the part-time arrangement will be mutually agreed upon by the employee and the employer, who must consider the employee's preferences. If the employer disagrees with the employee's proposed working hours, they must provide a reasoned explanation.

Box 9. Lithuania – Financial and insurance activities

Source*: Contributions from the Network of Eurofound Correspondents*

Right to disconnect

Finally, provisions on the right to disconnect are reported in the collective agreements included in Malta, Portugal, and Spain, with a special emphasis on teleworkers.

Conclusion

Despite relevant EU regulation on different aspects of working time and common challenges and drives across European countries, research consistently shows persistent cross-country differences in terms of governance approaches (how rules are set up) as well as on the substantive content of such rules (Eurofound, 2020, 2022; EU-OSHA, 2023; European Commission, 2024; Sanz de Miguel et al., 2025)

The current report has mapped regulatory reforms on working time and telework regulation from 2021 to 2024 on the basis of national reports drafted by the Eurofound Network of Correspondents. The report shows a growing effort to modernise national frameworks governing working time and organisation of work across European countries. As reflected in sections 1 and 2, 20 countries have introduced legislative reforms concerning working time while 16 countries have developed legislative reforms in telework. Moreover, several countries report also new development in collective bargaining. In line with previous research, the report finds a diversity of regulatory approaches which reflect different industrial relation traditions, policy priorities but also differing levels of maturity in working time and telework regulation prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the report also shows that some common themes that emerge across European countries which partly reflect the Europeanisation of working time flexibility debates and the impact of EU directives such as the Work Life Balance Directive.

In relation to working time, the report shows that many countries have developed new legislation or collective bargaining regulation which is driven by employee goals related to work-life balance and well-being (employee-oriented flexibility). Several countries are recognising the right to request flexible work arrangements with a view to support work-life balance. A few countries are also providing more autonomy to the employees in the organisation of working time or are improving worker's rights in the context of overtime. Also, in several countries there are current debates on working time reduction or legislation (including pilot projects) on compressed working time. Moreover, several countries have developed initiatives aiming to better protect workers against negative effects of working time flexibility developing either the right to disconnect or regulations requiring the recording of working time regulation. However, the report also identifies a few countries where reforms mainly determined by the operational requirements of the business (employer-oriented flexibility) and are aimed at enhancing employer's capacity to extent working time or derogate working time provisions.

With regard to telework, the report shows that in several countries policy reforms and collective agreements are increasingly oriented towards granting fair and qualify telework through provisions which prevent biases and discrimination for getting access to telework or recognise employer's duties to cover costs and expenses. In relation to telework and flexibility of working time, the findings show that collective bargaining is playing a more prominent in the regulation of this dimension compared to statutory legislation.

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Annex

Table A 1. Overview of sectoral collective agreements with working time provisions by sector and country

Sectors	Countries
A: Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania
B: Mining and Quarrying	Denmark, Finland, France, Norway, Romania, Slovenia
C: Manufacturing	Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Spain
D: Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply	Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Hungary, Norway, Romania, Slovenia, Spain
E: Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	Denmark, Finland, France, Portugal, Romania, Spain
F: Construction	Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Norway, Romania
G: Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Norway, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Spain
H: Transportation and Storage	Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain
I: Accommodation and Food Service Activities	Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia
J: Publishing, Broadcasting, and Content Production and Distribution Activities	Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain
K: Telecommunication, Computer Programming, Consulting, Computing Infrastructure, and other Information Service Activities	Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Portugal, Romania, Spain
L: Financial and Insurance Activities	Belgium, Denmark, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Spain
M: Real Estate Activities	Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Romania
N: Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	Denmark, Finland, France, Portugal, Romania, Spain

O: Administrative and Support Service Activities	**Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Romania**
P: Public Administration and Defence; Compulsory Social Security	**Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Romania**
Q: Education	**Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Norway, Portugal, Romania**
R: Human Health and Social Work Activities	**Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania, Spain**
S: Arts, Sports and Recreation	**Denmark, Finland, France, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania, Spain**
T: Other Service Activities	**Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Spain**
U: Activities of Households as Employers; Undifferentiated Goods and Services Producing Activities of Households for Own Use	**France, Romania**
V: Activities of Extraterritorial Organisations and Bodies	**Finland, Romania**

Note*: Some data is not available or missing in Poland, Estonia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Latvia, Netherlands, Malta, Sweden, Croatia*

Source*: Contributions from the Network of Eurofound Correspondents*

Table A 2. Overview of sectoral collective agreements with telework provisions by sector and country

Sectors	**Countries**
A: Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	**Portugal**
B: Mining and Quarrying	**Austria, Slovenia**
C: Manufacturing	**Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Portugal, Spain**
D: Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply	**Austria, Slovenia, Spain**
E: Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	**Austria, Finland, Portugal, Slovenia**
F: Construction	**Finland**
G: Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	**Belgium, Portugal, Spain**

H: Transportation and Storage	**Austria, Belgium, Finland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain**
I: Accommodation and Food Service Activities	**Portugal, Slovenia, Spain**
J: Publishing, Broadcasting, and Content Production and Distribution Activities	**Austria, Denmark, Finland, Portugal, Slovenia**
K: Telecommunication, Computer Programming, Consulting, Computing Infrastructure, and other Information Service Activities	**Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Portugal, Spain**
L: Financial and Insurance Activities	**Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Germany, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain**
M: Real Estate Activities	**Belgium, Finland, Slovenia**
N: Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	**Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Spain**
O: Administrative and Support Service Activities	**Belgium, Denmark, Finland**
P: Public Administration and Defence; Compulsory Social Security	**Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland**
Q: Education	**Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Lithuania, Portugal**
R: Human Health and Social Work Activities	**Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Portugal, Spain**
S: Arts, Sports and Recreation	**Denmark, Finland, Lithuania**
T: Other Service Activities	**Denmark, Finland**
V: Activities of Extraterritorial Organisations and Bodies	**Finland**

Note: *Some data is not available or missing in Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, and Sweden*

Source: *Contributions from the Network of Eurofound Correspondents*

Table A 3. Sample of company-level collective agreements (and company policies) by country and date of entry

Country	**Sector (company)**	**Date of entry into force**
Bulgaria	Telecommunications, ICT (Progress)	2021
Cyprus*	Financial and insurance activities (Ernst & Young Cyprus Hybrid Model)	October 2021
Denmark	Education (Aarhus University Flexible Working Time and Teleworking Policy)	January 2021
Estonia	Telecommunications, ICT (Remote work agreement in Telia)	2019

Finland	Public administration (CBA for the National Gallery)	April 2024
France	Financial and insurance activities (Agreement on teleworking at Allianz Bank)	April 2024
Ireland*	Telecommunications, ICT (Tik Tok Remote Working Policy)	October 2023
Italy	Financial and insurance activities (SACE ‘Flex4Future’ Agreement)	December 2023
Lithuania	Financial and insurance activities (AB SEB banko kolektyvinė sutartis Nr. PV3-567).	March 2021
Latvia*	Public administration (Annex to the Information Report “Flexible Work Organization in Public Administration”)	2021
Malta*	Public administration (Manual on work-life balance measures – Office of the Principal Permanent Secretary Office of the Prime Minister)	January 2023
Netherlands	Professional, scientific and technical activities (Panteia)	January 2023
Portugal	Financial and insurance activities (Company Agreement Generali Seguros/SINAPSA)	February 2022
Slovenia	Manufacturing (Plastic Skaza company policy on home-based work)	January 2020
Slovakia	Public administration (Collective agreement for employees in public services)	December 2023

Source: Authors, based on national contributions by the Network of Eurofound Correspondents

Note: (*) not a collective agreement but internal policies or guidelines

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