

# FUTURE OF WORK

## Home Edition

## The elusive world of remote work

A new freedom in the realm of decent work or a fast way forward into the platformisation of work?

25th  
of November

Via  
Zoom

2020

### 12:00 - 12:35 INTRODUCTORY PANEL

In the introductory panel, we will discuss the main topics of teleworking.\* Although teleworking has been with us since the 1970s, until recently it either involved only a particular type of worker (mostly those without permanent employment) or covered few individuals. With Covid-19, a mass transition to work outside employers' premises began.

Envisaging the changes induced by digital transformation, the Serbian Labour Law (2005) distinguished between various forms of work outside the employer's premises. However, during the pandemic it became clear that this area was insufficiently regulated, leading to numerous challenges for employers, workers, and trade unions. The Conference will discuss all varieties of work outside employers' premises and seek for potential solutions for its regulation.

The following topics will be at the centre of the session:

- How many types of work outside employers' premises can we identify?
- Gaps in defining and regulating work outside employers' premises in both documents of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and in national legislation.
- Common features and differences between teleworking and (online) platform work, based on the CENTER's research.

### 12:35 - 13:35 SESSION ONE - THE GREAT DIVIDE

The aim of the session is to shed light on the horizontal and vertical division of labour, a divide that greatly gained in prominence during the pandemic, and to open discussion on the consequences of this regrouping.

It was the digital transformation that made teleworking possible. However, one of the most visible and extraordinary effects of teleworking that Covid 19 brought into the light is the great division of the labour force into workers who will be able to work remotely and those who will not. This division is both horizontal, and depends on the sector in which the worker is employed, as well as vertical, since senior managers are more likely to be in a position to work remotely, while teleworking is not an option for those involved in particular processes (such as production, retail, or transport).

In this session we will discuss the following topics:

- Which sectors in Serbia have managed to transfer their operations online and under what conditions?
- How did institutional factors affect the ability of companies to switch their business online and organise remote work?
- What are the similarities and differences in access to labour rights between workers who continued to go to work and those who started teleworking from home?
- Positive and negative examples of how teleworking has been organised, not only during the pandemic, but also before the outbreak of Covid-19 in different geographies.
- What are the long-term effects of this division and how should they be understood from the perspective of the Decent Work Agenda?



\*Teleworking is defined as the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs), such as smart-phones, tablets, laptops, and desktop computers, for work that is performed outside the employer's premises (Eurofound and ILO, 2017). Although there is a difference between teleworking and working from home, we will use these two terms as synonyms in the context of the conference and the Labor Law (Article 42).

13:35 - 13:50 BREAK / ONLINE ART EXHIBITION, SAVA KNEŽEVIĆ

## 13:50 - 14:50 SESSION TWO - NEW VULNERABILITIES

The aim of this session is to identify shortcomings in current labour legislation and employment contracts when it comes to teleworking, and to inform the work of those who make decisions in labour disputes (courts, and the Serbian Labour Dispute Settlement Agency) and watchdogs dealing with discrimination and privacy issues.

While employers see remote work as a new way to cut costs on office space and worker transportation, the workers themselves value the time they are now able to spend with their families and the opportunity to schedule work according to their own priorities and needs. However, from the perspective of the Decent Work Agenda, teleworking has in practice proven far from perfect.

We will discuss three important issues in three parallel sessions with the aim of proposing appropriate solutions:

- Work-life balance in general and its gender dimension.
- Supervision and control of teleworkers versus their right to privacy.
- Division of costs of remote working between workers and employers.

The recommendations of the three working groups will be presented at the final panel.

14:50 - 15:05 BREAK

## 15:05 - 15:40 CONCLUDING PANEL: FROM REMOTE WORK TO THE PLATFORMISATION OF WORK

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, some traditional workers had never had the opportunity to experience telecommuting, the daily reality of gig and digital platform workers. As the CENTER's research shows, in spite of its greater flexibility, this work weakens ties between employers and workers, as well as among the workers themselves, prevents collective action by workers, and endangers their identities.

This session will focus on summarising recommendations of the working groups, primarily for the new Serbian Labour Law, with the idea that teleworking should bring greater freedom to the world of decent work and prevent further erosion of workers' rights and freedoms.



FONDACIJA ZA OTVORENO DRUŠTVO, SRBIJA  
OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATION, SERBIA



International  
Labour  
Organization

