

TELEWORKING - A RESULT OF THE EVOLUTION OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Associate Professor Ph.D. Delia TESELIOS

“Constantin Brâncoveanu” University of Pitești, Romania
E-mail: delia_teselios@yahoo.com

Associate Professor Ph.D. Mihaela SAVU

“Constantin Brâncoveanu” University of Pitești, Romania

Abstract: *The continuous and rapid evolution of information and communication technology has created the premises of the remote activity, thus replacing the classical way of working as an employee working in an office at the employer's headquarters. This paper aims to present a series of statistical data on the number of employees in the European Union who usually work from home using information and communication technology. Comparing the statistical data, Romania is at the end of the ranking, but this ranking is strongly influenced by the fact that this type of work has recently been regulated in our country. The quantitative analysis of the number of employees working at home is complemented by the advantages and disadvantages of this activity.*

Key words: *teleworking, teleworker, employer, employee.*

Clasificarea JEL: *J01, J80.*

1. Introduction

In today's information society, in a knowledge-based economy, the relationship between employer and employee needs to be much more flexible. Taking into account the modernization of the labor market at European level, the Government Program 2017-2020 no. 1/2017, approved by the Decision of the Parliament of Romania, in the section "Stimulating the creation of new jobs" referred to "The introduction of new types of employment contracts (eg teleworking)" (Consiliul Economic și Social, 2017).

Following this initiative, on April 2, 2018, Law no. 81/2018 has been published, regarding the regulation of the teleworking activity.

The law introduces the concepts of teleworking and tele-employee, as follows (Monitorul Oficial, 2018):

➤ *teleworking* is the form of work organization whereby the employee, on a regular and voluntary basis, fulfills his specific duties for the position, occupation or job that he holds, in a place other than the work place organized by the employer, at least one day a month, using information and communication technology;

➤ *teleworker* is any employee who carries out his activity under the conditions provided above.

Until the enactment of this law, the Labor Code, in articles 108, 109 and 110 regulated only the work at home which requires the employee to perform his work at his domicile, a provision that remains in force. The new provisions regulate both the situation in which the work is carried out at home and the situations in which the work is carried out in various other places, different from home. However, the names of the two concepts are used interchangeably.

2. Aspects regarding teleworking

An evolution, at European level, between 2008-2017 of the number of employees who usually work from home is presented in (Figure 1). Taking into account the fact that in Romania the standard retirement age is currently 65 years for men and 63 years for women, the maximum interval chosen for carrying out the present analysis is [15,64] years.

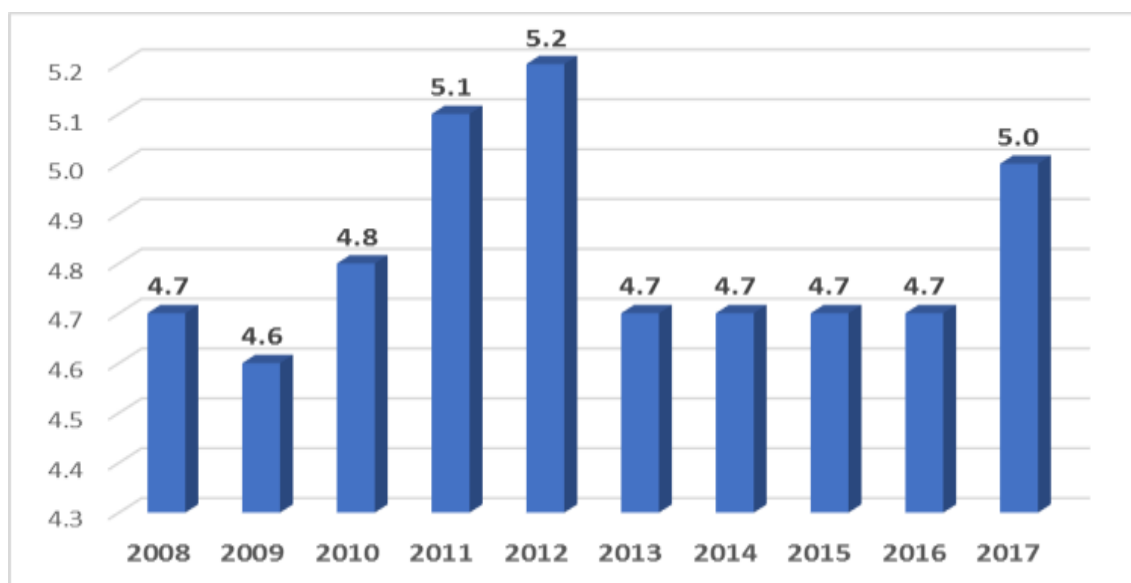


Figure 1. Evolution of the number of employees between the ages of 15 and 64 who usually work from home, at EU 28 level (2008-2017, % of the total number of jobs)

Source: Eurostat, 2019, *Employed persons working from home as a percentage of the total employment, by sex, age and professional status (%)*. [online] Available at: <<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>> [Accessed 17 March 2019].

From Figure 1, it can be noticed that between 2008 and 2012, there is an upward trend in the number of employees who usually work from home, except for the variation of -0.1% in 2009. The highest percentage is reached in 2012 (5.2%), followed by a 0.5% decrease in 2013.

The year 2017 brought an increase of 0.3% in the number of employees who usually work from home, compared to the period 2013-2016.

At the level of our country, the evolution of the number of employees between the ages of 15 and 64 who usually work from home, in the period 2008-2017, is presented in Figure 2.

The values belong to the range [0.2%, 0.5%], with a variation of $\pm 0.1\%$ from year to year.

The difference from the European average, for the analyzed period, is between 4.2% and 4.8%, in 2017 only 0.4% of the total number of jobs in Romania were occupied by employees who usually work from home, compared to the EU28 average of 5.0%.

This can be partly explained by the fact that the law regulating teleworking activity in Romania has been implemented since April 5, 2018.

At European level, the step towards the modernization of the labor market has been made since 2002 when the European Framework Agreement for teleworking was concluded. The social partners that signed this Framework Agreement are: the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the Union of Industrial and Employers Confederations of Europe (UNICE) (since 2007 the organization has changed its name into BUSINESSSEUROPE, the European Business Confederation), the European Union of Craft and Small and Medium Enterprises (UEAPME) and the European Center for Public Participation Enterprises and Enterprises of General Economic Interest (CEEP). The agreement aims at establishing a general framework at European level on working conditions of teleworkers and reconciling the common flexibility and security needs of employers and workers (Summaries of EU Legislation, 2019).

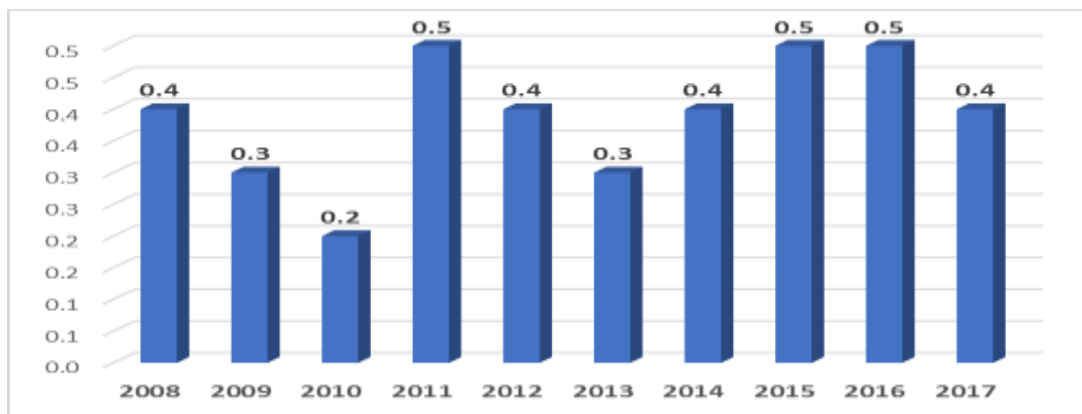


Figure 2. Evolution of the number of employees between the ages of 15 and 64 who usually work from home, at the level of Romania, (2008-2017,% of the total number of jobs)

Source: Eurostat, 2019, *Employed persons working from home as a percentage of the total employment, by sex, age and professional status (%)*. [online] Available at: <<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>> [Accesed 17 March 2019].

According to data provided by Eurostat, in 2017 Romania was on the penultimate place, with a percentage of 0.4% employees between the ages of 15 and 64 who usually work from home, at a difference of 4.6% from the European average, Bulgaria being on the last place with a percentage of 0.3%. At the opposite pole is the Netherlands where 13.7% of the employees usually work from home (Figure 3).

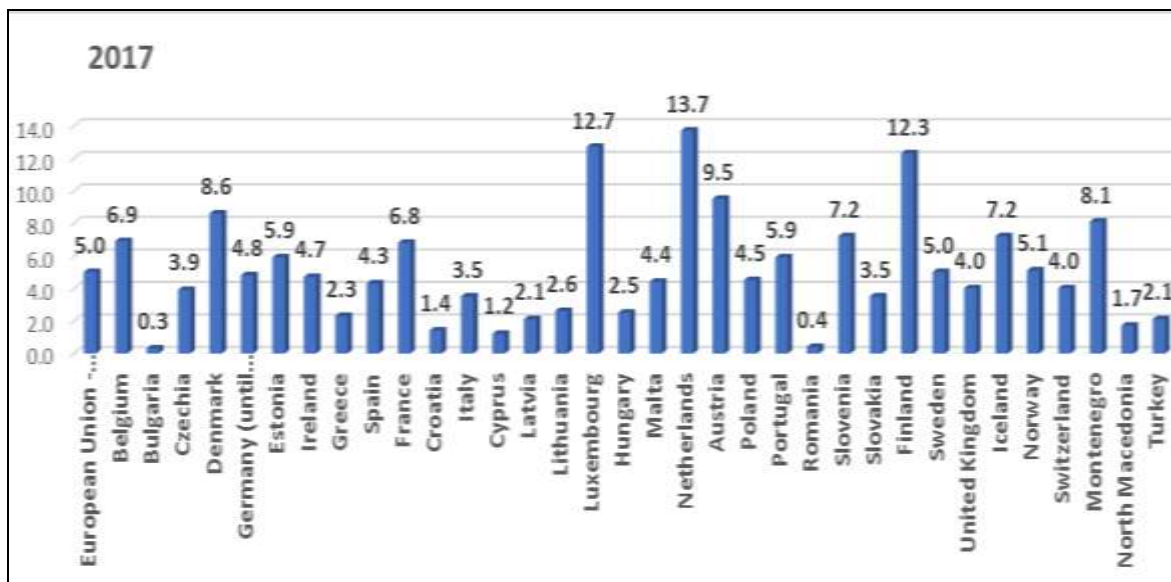


Figure 3. Percentage of employees between the ages of 15 and 64 who usually work from home, at EU28 level (2017, % of total number of jobs)

Source: Eurostat, 2019, *Employed persons working from home as a percentage of the total employment, by sex, age and professional status (%)*. [online] Available at: <<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>> [Accesed 17 March 2019].

The frequency of work at home is higher among women, at European Union level in 21 Member States, their number being higher than that of men who usually work in a different working place than the one organized by the employer.

The data analysis from Figure 4 places Romania in the last place with a percentage of 0.5% women and 0.3% men who usually work from home, the European average being 5.3% women and 4.7% men.

Luxembourg (14.2%), the Netherlands (12.6%) and Finland (11.8%) occupy the first three places in terms of the number of working women at home. However, in the Netherlands, the number of men working from home is 14.7%, thus exceeding the number of women. The same situation is found in Finland, where 12.8% of men work from home.

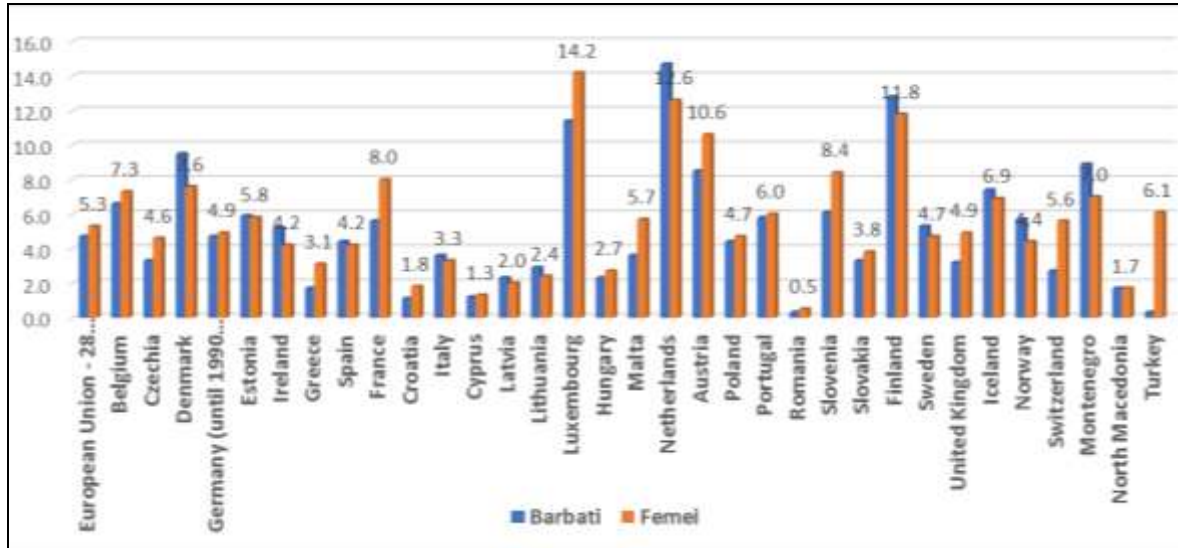


Figure 4. Percentage of male and female employees between the ages of 15 and 64 who usually work from home, at EU28 level (2017, % of total number of jobs)

Source: Eurostat, 2019, *Employed persons working from home as a percentage of the total employment, by sex, age and professional status (%)*. [online] Available at: <<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>> [Accesed 17 March 2019]

Additions to the information provided in the figure above:

- In Figure 4, the percentages added to the graph correspond to the series "Women".
- Bulgaria, for the year 2017, does not have reported data for male employees between the ages of 15 and 64 who usually work from home. Therefore it does not appear in the graph in Figure 4.

Regarding different sectors of the economy, the latest European Working Conditions Survey published in 2016 by the EU Agency for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions - Eurofound (which includes EU28, Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, as well as Norway and Switzerland (Eurofound, 2019) show that most teleworkers are in the financial and services sectors, with education taking the first place (Eurofound, 2017).

4. Conclusions

The changes covered by this law are represented by "the flexibility and adaptation of labor relations to the current socio-economic realities in relation to the dynamic evolution of the labor market" (Consiliul Economic și Social, 2017). Teleworking is beneficial for both employees and employers.

Of the positive aspects brought to the employees by this system of activity, we mention:

- they no longer have to pay the transport cost to the workplace organized by the employer;
- elimination or reduction of travel time to and from the workplace organized by the employer;
- autonomy and flexibility;
- increasing productivity by eliminating disruptive factors from the workplace;
- Teleworkers can devote more time to family, to personal development;
- people with disabilities are more likely to find a job;
- the lifestyle can become a healthier one, being known that the food ordered / consumed at work does not include, most of the times, healthy foods;
- reducing the risk of contacting communicable diseases in communities.

Of the advantages brought to the employers we mention:

- the reduction of expenses for renting spaces, for paying utilities, for discounts on the travel of employees in the interest of service;
- the possibility of hiring very well trained people from a professional point of view, located at great distances from the workplace organized by the employer, thus eliminating the geographical barriers.

In addition to the undeniable positive aspects, teleworking can also generate a number of negative aspects. Some of these are derived from the risk of leaking confidential data and information due to the use of unsafe communication channels. Another negative aspect, not to be neglected, is that some employees may be affected by the lack of socialization, the lack of direct contact with employers and colleagues, and isolation.

Although in Romania there is the lowest percentage of employees between the ages of 15 and 64 who usually work from home, we believe that over time, employers and employees will look less skeptically at this mode of activity.

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