

COMMITTEE: Working conditions (ILO 3)

ISSUE: Teleworking and the right to disconnect: How can we guarantee fair and decent working conditions?

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PRESENTATION OF THE CHAIR



Hello delegates! My name is Jasmine Eugene and I'm 16 years old. It's a great honor for me to be your co-chair for FerMun 2025. I'm of Guadeloupean and Tunisian origin, but I was born in Geneva and lived there for over eight years before moving to France. I'm also a member of the English section at the Lycée International de Ferney Voltaire. In my spare time I love reading, traveling and meeting new people! As for sport, I practice fencing at a high level and have taken part in several competitions, notably the French national championships. For FerMun 2025, I'll be co-chairing the committee on working conditions, which will deal with teleworking, the right to disconnect and the balance of working hours. Since the Covid 19 pandemic, this has been a crucial topic in the news, so I'm looking forward to seeing the resolutions and debates you'll come up with in January!

KEYWORDS

Right to disconnect: The right to disconnect is a principle whereby a worker is entitled to not be connected to professional digital tools outside working hours.

Collective agreement: A collective agreement concluded at company level, either between the employer and representative worker unions, or between the employer and worker representatives, and applied exclusively to the company.

Time management: Time management in the workplace can be defined as the discipline of using tools and work methods to plan actions over time and prioritize them.

Work-life balance: Work-life balance reflects the way in which individuals organize their time between work commitments and personal activities.

Trade union delegate: The trade union delegate (DS) acts as a link between workers and the trade union organization to which he or she belongs to.

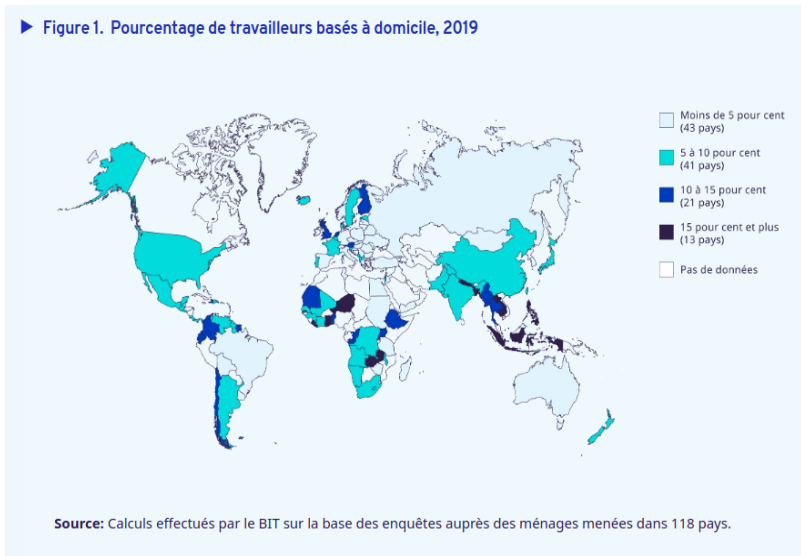
Syndicate: Association whose purpose is to defend the common interests of people working in the same profession.

Telework: According to the ILO, telework refers to workers using information and communication technologies (ICT) to carry out their work from a distance.

Platform worker (Gig worker): Self-employed or salaried worker or operating under another status, or even without status, working to produce a service sold by a digital platform. In theory, digital platform workers enjoy a high degree of autonomy and control over their work.

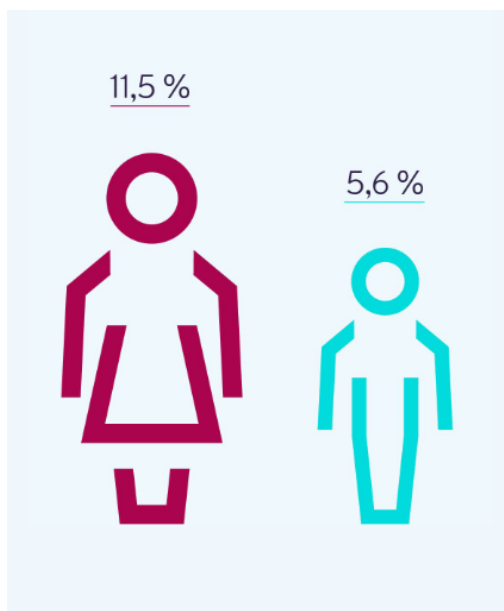
OVERVIEW

1. *Teleworking and working from home*



Home working is widespread throughout the world. In high-income countries, it is mostly linked to teleworking, but there are also significant pockets of homeworking in the manufacturing sector. Historically, industrial homeworking was common in Europe and North America, but with the shift of labor-intensive manufacturing to developing

countries in recent decades, much of this work has followed. In developing countries, particularly in Asia, home-based work is present in various global supply chains, such as those for clothing, electronics and household goods. The majority of home-based workers are women. According to ILO estimates, in 2019, 147 million women and 113 million men will be working from home, with



women accounting for 56% of this category of workers. The proportion of women working from home (11.5%) is significantly higher than that of men (5.6%). It's logical, then, that home-based work strongly reflects gender disparities. Given that women around the world continue to bear much of the burden of unpaid care responsibilities, some are opting to work from home in order to reconcile these tasks with income-earning opportunities, even if this often lengthens their working day. However, this option is appreciated not only by women and men seeking flexibility, but also by workers with disabilities who would otherwise have fewer opportunities for paid work. teleworking quickly

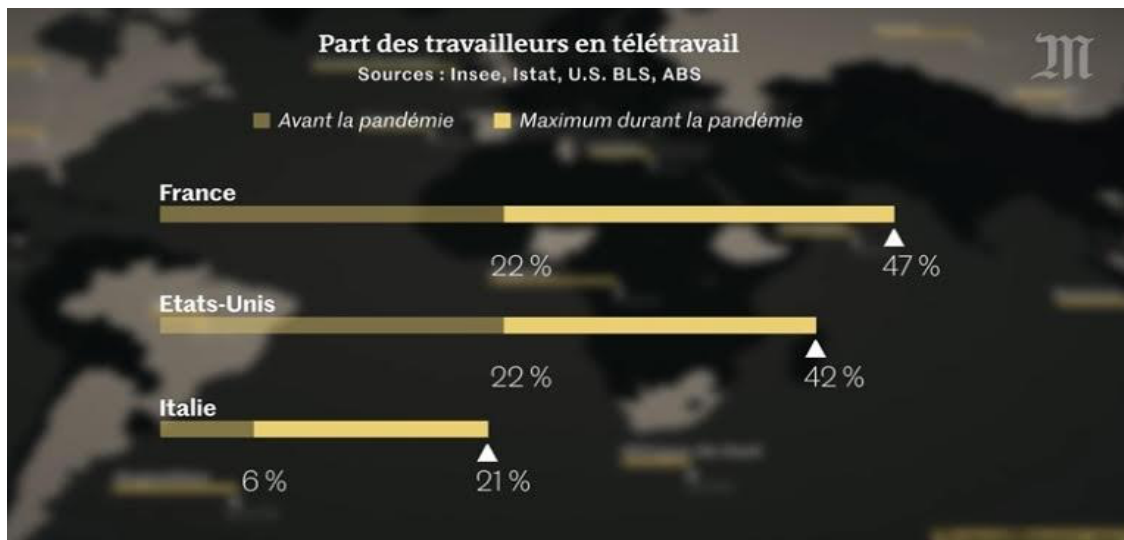
became popular during the COVID-19 pandemic, due to the containment and social distancing measures imposed to limit the spread of the virus. Faced with the health emergency, many companies had to adapt their operations to enable their workers to work remotely. This sudden shift to teleworking was facilitated by technological advances, including online communication tools, collaboration platforms and cloud services. The pandemic demonstrated that teleworking could be effective in many sectors, even those where it was not commonly practiced before. As a result, teleworking has transformed itself from a temporary norm into a sustainable option for many companies, profoundly altering working patterns and accelerating a trend that would otherwise have taken years to develop, raising a new issue: the right to disconnect.

According to the ILO, by spring 2020 :

- 557 million people work at home or 1 in 5 workers, 17.4% of all jobs
- in France, 80% of managers and professionals have been able to telework compared to only 35% of workers and 7% of blue-collar workers

According to economist José María Barrero, inequalities between workers are on the rise, as only those with higher incomes and higher levels of education are able to compete with those with lower incomes and lower levels of education.

Several countries, notably France, Italy and the United States, saw a sharp increase in teleworking in 2020.



Source: [US Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), [INSEE](#) and [ISTAT](#)

2) Impact of teleworking on the boundary between personal and professional life

According to UNI Global Union, teleworking has significantly blurred the boundary between personal and professional life. While this form of work offers much-appreciated flexibility, it also entails a more pronounced intrusion of professional responsibilities into the private sphere.



workers often find themselves forced to be :

- connected outside working hours
- answering e-mails or attending meetings outside working hours

This extends the working day and makes it difficult to disconnect mentally. This porosity between the two spheres can generate increased stress, affect mental well-being, and erode the balance between personal and professional life - crucial elements for workers' long-term health and productivity. UNI Global Union therefore stresses the importance of putting in place clear policies to preserve this balance and protect the right to disconnect.

A frequently quoted statistic in change management is that 70% of transformation initiatives fail. The introduction of the right to disconnect in the workplace, which can bring about cultural change at both individual and organizational levels, therefore requires the active involvement of all staff in the design and implementation of new working practices. If companies fail to put rules in place to protect their workers, several negative consequences can result:

- Burnout
- increased stress and anxiety
- physical health problems
- reduced quality of life
- depression
- impact on personal relationships

In 2022, the WHO and the International Labour Organization (ILO) published joint guidelines to address psychosocial risks at work, including those related to teleworking and disconnection.

However, since 2020 several unions have been fighting for the right to disconnect, as well as pushing governments to adopt laws and policies that can provide a framework for teleworking. During a UNI Youth webinar, participants (Alex Hogback, Director of UNI Professionals and Managers; Sofia Scasserra of Faecys, Argentina; Seiji Kugimoto of Nipporo, Japan; and Jorge Maeso Carmona of CCOO, Spain) discussed their unions' efforts to fight for the right to disconnect, as well as to push governments to adopt laws and policies that can serve as a framework for teleworking.

3) Inequalities in access to and implementation of the right to disconnect

The right to disconnect, although recognized in some jurisdictions, is not uniformly accessible or equally applied to all workers. Several factors contribute to these inequalities.

- **Sectoral disparities:** In sectors where remote working is commonplace, such as IT and finance, the right to disconnect is more easily discussed and sometimes better respected (around 60% of workers claim to benefit from measures enabling them to limit their availability outside working hours). Conversely, in sectors such as healthcare, retail or hospitality, where availability is often required outside normal working hours, this right is much more difficult to implement (around 20% of workers claim to have recourse to these protections). A study carried out by the Institut Montaigne in 2020 revealed that almost 70% of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) professionals say they are regularly called upon outside working hours, often to solve urgent problems or maintain critical systems. Although some have access to disconnection policies, the pressure to stay connected is high in this sector. But still, according to a study carried out in France by UNSA Éducation in 2021 it was revealed that 60% of teachers feel obliged to answer parents' e-mails or prepare lessons outside their official working hours.
- **Geographical inequalities:** In Europe, 27% of workers say they are solicited by their employer outside regular working hours. In France, where a law on the right to disconnect has been in place since 2017, this figure falls to around 10%. However, in countries such as the USA, where there is no specific national legislation, up 35% of workers are regularly contacted after working hours.

- **Hierarchical impact:** A survey shows that 70% of senior managers claim to have control over their working hours and workload, compared with only 30% of junior workers, who feel obliged to respond to requests outside normal working hours to prove their commitment. Executives, for example, are often expected to be available for urgent decision-making, but this availability is often better compensated by flexible working hours or bonuses. On the other hand, junior workers may be asked to perform non-critical tasks outside working hours, without adequate compensation. What's more, a Harvard Business Review survey reveals that 70% of executives have the ability to structure their working day in such a way as to better protect their personal lives.
- **Unequal access to tools and knowledge:** A study conducted by Eurofound in 2020 revealed that 40% of European workers know little or nothing about their disconnection rights, limiting their ability to claim them. Furthermore, only 25% of companies in the EU have implemented technological tools to help manage schedules and effectively disconnect workers outside working hours

ILO TREATIES AND MAJOR EVENTS

03/06/2021

The draft Council conclusion on telework at the Council of the European Union: This draft aims to establish guidelines and recommendations for EU member states concerning the organization and regulation of telework, which has expanded rapidly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1981

ILO Convention 155 on Occupational Safety and Health: This convention stipulates that employers must ensure a safe working environment, which also includes homeworkers and teleworkers. It focuses on the identification and management of work-related risks, including those that may arise in a teleworking context.

1996

ILO Home Work Convention n°177: Although focused on home workers, this convention also applies to teleworking, as it deals with the rights of workers who carry out their work away from the employer's premises. It covers issues such as equal treatment, occupational health and safety, and the regulation of working conditions.

26/11/2020

The French national interprofessional agreement: to be voted on in November 2020 in France, this is a text negotiated by the social partners (worker unions and employer organizations) aimed at providing a framework for teleworking and ensuring the right to disconnect for teleworking workers.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Several UN agencies, notably the ILO and WHO, are tackling the subject of disconnection at work. In their joint report published in 2022 a report aimed at putting in place measures to protect workers' health when teleworking, here are some of them:

How can we ensure workers' health? What policies should be put in place?

- Defining and respecting work schedules would make it possible to set clear working hours and stick to them to protect workers' mental health.
- Integrating mental health into human resources management policies.

How can the right to disconnect be integrated into teleworking policies through collective bargaining ?

- The establishment of clear and binding policies, including collective bargaining, which would enable companies to work with unions to develop teleworking policies that include the right to disconnect.

How can time management tools limit communications outside working hours?

- The use of time management tools that set up symes that restrict the sending of e-mails or messages outside working hours. For example, some companies would have limited access to email servers outside office hours.

How can workers safely report violations of work policies?

- Regular audits and channels so that workers can report violations without fear of reprisal

How can we help workers deal with stress and burn-out at work?

- Offer counseling services to help workers manage work-related stress and burn-out.

How do you maintain a good relationship between workers and employers when discussing working hours?

- Establish a dialogue between workers and employers, enabling everyone to share their respective concerns and reach a more realistic compromise when discussing work schedules.

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ILO analytical summary on home-based work: <https://www.ilo.org/fr/publications/le-travail-domicile-de-linvisibilite-au-travail-decent>

Video on teleworking and the right to disconnect presented by François Vaccaro, a lawyer specializing in labor law: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3e5OyZFZJI&t=131s>

“Le Monde” video on the effectiveness of teleworking:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z9OpWQnohZk&t=36s>

European Parliament video on the right to disconnect:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zMJ_YpfiyoE

Draft conclusion of the Council of the European Union on telework:

<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9131-2021-INIT/fr/pdf>

Ted Talk: Do we have the right to disconnect?: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qcpUJk-RSPM>

"Working in digital platforms: the socio-economic limits of a new employment model":

<https://labo.societenumerique.gouv.fr/en/articles/work-in-digital-platforms-socio-economic-limits-of-a-new-job-model/>