

## **Telework in Greece during the Covid-19 pandemic: A preliminary review of evidence**

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The first COVID-19 case was recorded in Greece on 26 February 2020. In response the government started putting in place social distancing and isolation measures which culminated to the imposition of restrictions on all non-essential movement throughout the country, effective from 23 March. The gradual lifting of these restrictions has started on May 4<sup>th</sup> and is still ongoing.

SEV has published a “Guide to telework”, shortly after the first social distancing measures were introduced, followed by a comprehensive survey regarding the impact of the pandemic to business and employment.

In this note we review the evidence on the use of remote work/telework in Greek companies during the lockdown period. In particular we examine: The extent of the shift towards remote-work/telework, the adaptation of employees and their level of satisfaction with this form of work and some legal and administrative issues that have emerged. We also discuss the prospects of remote-work/telework, after the Covid-19 crisis.

#### A) Telework in Greece in the wake of Covid-19

**26%**

of employees **started working from home**  
([Eurofound 2020](#))

- The Covid-19 pandemic has generated a significant rise in the share of employees working from home, as the government and business put in place social distancing and isolation measures.

**95%**

of companies **introduced telework schemes**  
([Greek People Management Association 2020](#))

- Remote work/telework has been used by the vast majority of companies and constitutes the most common countermeasure.

**83%**

of employees who started telework, work **exclusively from home**  
([KPMG 2020](#))

- Companies that shifted to telework have done so to the maximum possible extent - that is for all employees who perform tasks compatible with telework and for all or most of their working time.

## B) Adaptation and satisfaction

Despite the absence of prior experience for the vast majority of companies and employees, adaptation to telework arrangements has been relatively smooth...

**73%**

of companies have **adapted immediately**

([German Hellenic Chamber of Commerce and Industry 2020](#))

**81%**

of employees have **adapted in less than a week**

([KPMG 2020](#))

...and the overall experience is considered as positive by both employees and employers.

**67%**

of companies find telework **quite of very effective**

([German Hellenic Chamber of Commerce and Industry 2020](#))

**88%**

of employees are **satisfied or very satisfied** with telework

([KPMG 2020](#))

### The main benefits:

- + **79%** reduction in time spent commuting to work
- + **40%** additional time spent with family/cohabitants
- + **40%** better work-life balance
- + **39%** improved concentration
- + **38%** better work-time quality
- + **17%** more free time

### The main problems:

- **59%** potential blurring of boundaries between paid work and personal life
- **57%** absence of scenery changes
- **38%** have to stay at the same place
- **29%** difficult to achieve work-life balance
- **28%** isolation
- **24%** difficult to concentrate

(source: [KPMG 2020](#))

### C) Legal issues

In view of the exceptional circumstances created by the Covid-19 pandemic the government has deemed necessary to **temporarily suspend the voluntary character of telework and allow employers to adopt it unilaterally**. The relevant provision effective as of 11 March 2020 reads as follows:

“An employer may determine that the work provided by an employee in the fulfillment of their individual employment contract, may be carried out with the system of remote-working”.

The Ministry of Labour has also stipulated that employers may request from employees who participate in the government subsidised furlough scheme to telework, in order to cover temporary company needs, but this leeway may be applied to a maximum 10% of furloughed employees.

### D) The future of telework in Greece

The Covid-19 pandemic has opened a window of **opportunity to expand the use of remote work/telework**, which had hitherto been relatively low.

**5%**

Greek employees teleworked regularly in 2015  
([Eurofound 2017](#))



**33,8%**

Estimated jobs in Greece compatible with telework  
([Centre of Planning and Economic Research 2020](#))

Preliminary survey data suggests that **employees would generally support** such a prospect, while **employers are less sanguine**.

**67%**

of employees **positive/very positive to telework on a permanent basis**  
([KPMG 2020](#))

**39.7%**

of employers intended to **maintain telework arrangements**  
([German Hellenic Chamber of Commerce and Industry 2020](#))