



FACULTY OF ARTS
Charles University

Policy Developments in Digital Work Arrangements

Flexible Arrangements in the Context of Labor Market Digitalization

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Overview of the presentation

Digitalization Policies: Addressing crucial policies aimed at fostering digital innovation in labour markets, highlighting initiatives and support systems.

(Post-)Pandemic Labour Markets: Examining how the pandemic catalysed remote work practices.

Analysis of Legal Frameworks: Highlighting key differences and similarities in legislative approaches to digital work between Austria and the Czech Republic.

Definition of Key Concepts

- **Digitalization of Workplaces**

Digital tools, including ICT tools that enable workers to work from anywhere at any time (Chung, 2024).

- **Work from Home/Telework**

Telework is a form of organising and/or performing work, using information technology, in the context of an employment contract/relationship, where work, which could also be performed at the employers premises, is carried out away from those premises on a regular basis (EU Framework Agreement on Telework, 2002).

Digitalization as EU policy

- Decision (EU) 2022/24813 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2022 established the Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030 (“DDPP”)
- DESI Indicators since 2014



Work-life Balance and Digitalization on EU Level



Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on Work-life balance

Directive (EU) 2024/2831
On Working Through Digital Labour Platforms



2002 Framework Agreement on Teleworking

Theory

- **Decommodification of Time:** Examining how time can be viewed as a resource and form of capital separate from labor, promoting autonomy (Suckert, 2022)
- **Capability Theory:** Understanding individuals' capabilities and resource access as pivotal in shaping workplace environments and opportunities (Hobson, 2018).
- **Gender and Digital Work:** Discussing how gender arrangements inform our understanding of the evolving dynamics of work arrangements in the digital age (Chung, 2024).
- **Facilitation by Remote Work:** Analyzing the interactions between remote work and multilocality, emphasizing how flexibility enhances job satisfaction (Randall et al., 2022).

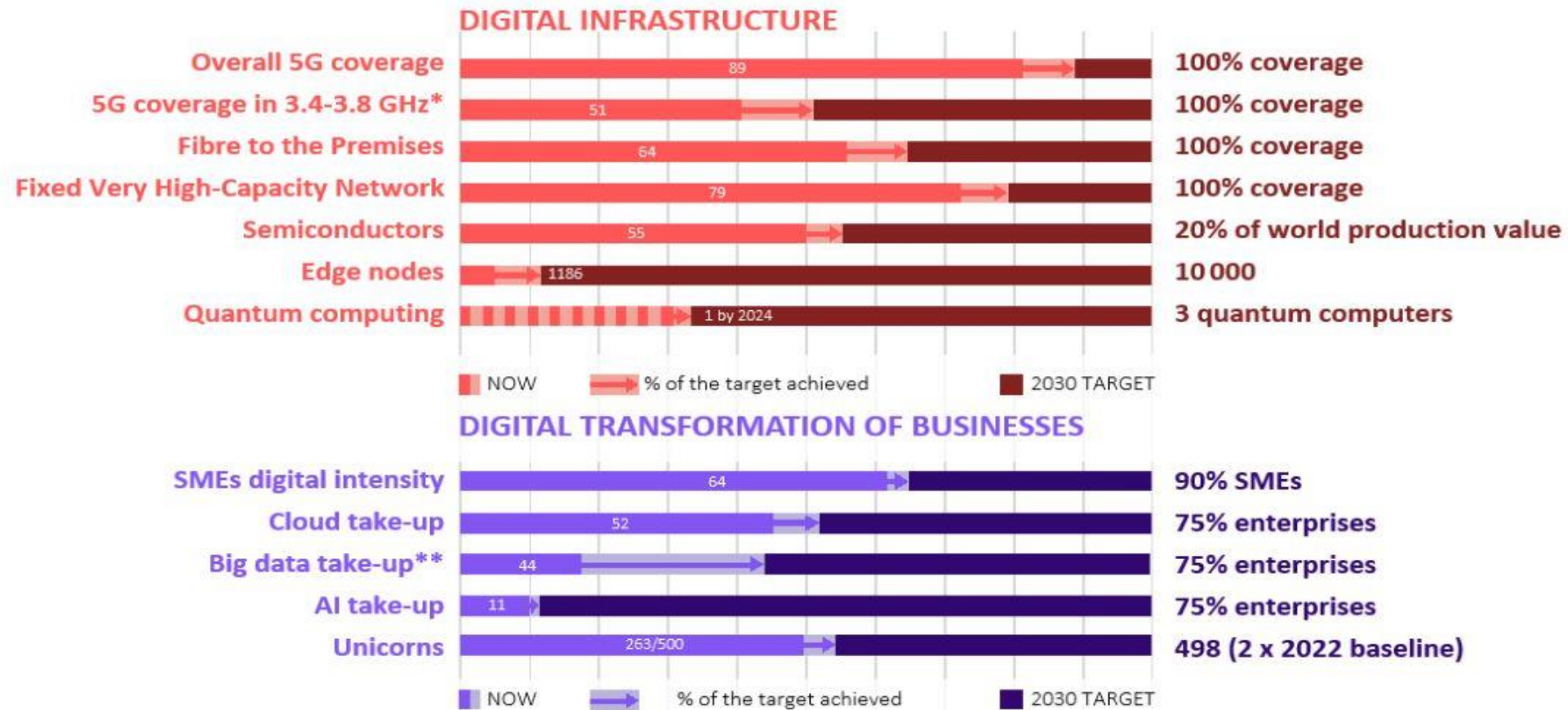


Photo by CoWomen on Unsplash

Indicators DD I

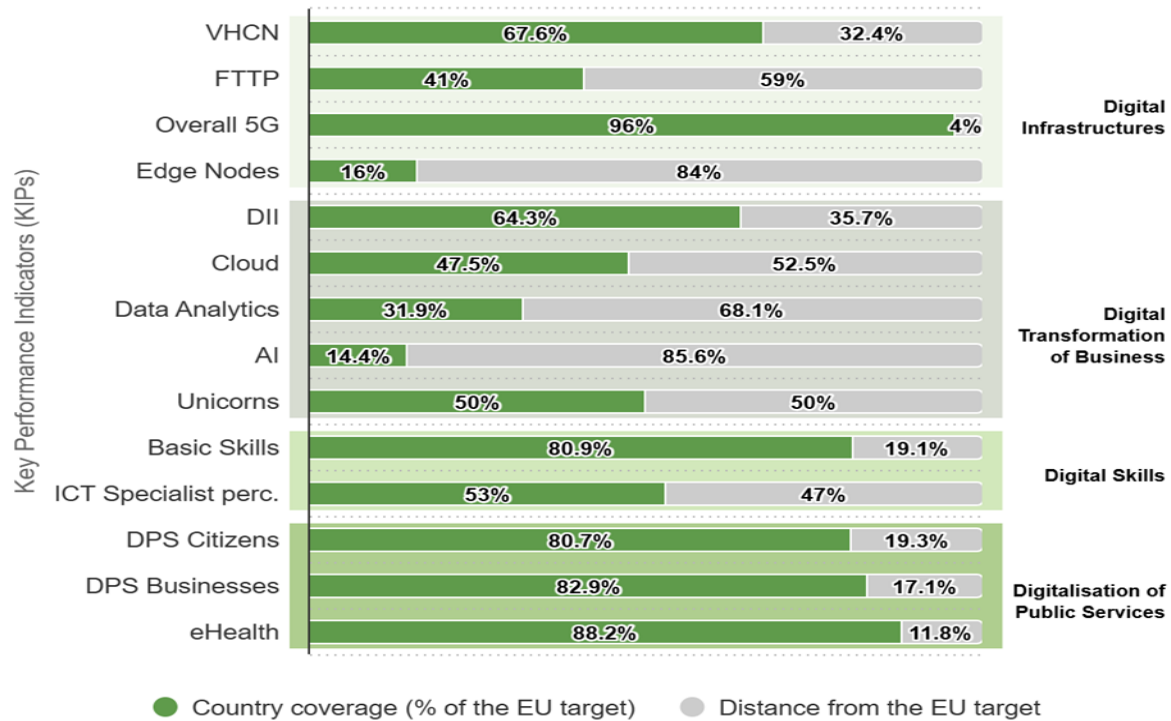


Indicators DD II

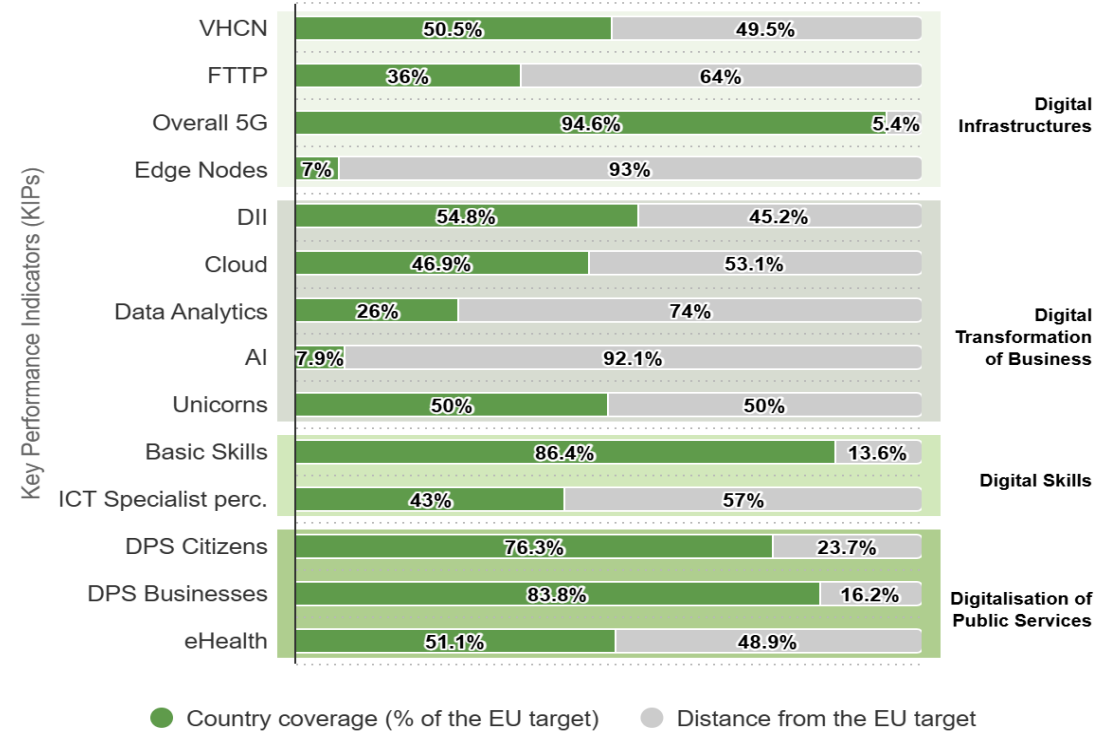


Digitalization in Austria progressing more

Austria



Czechia



Pandemic Dynamics: Digitalization and Workplace Flexibility

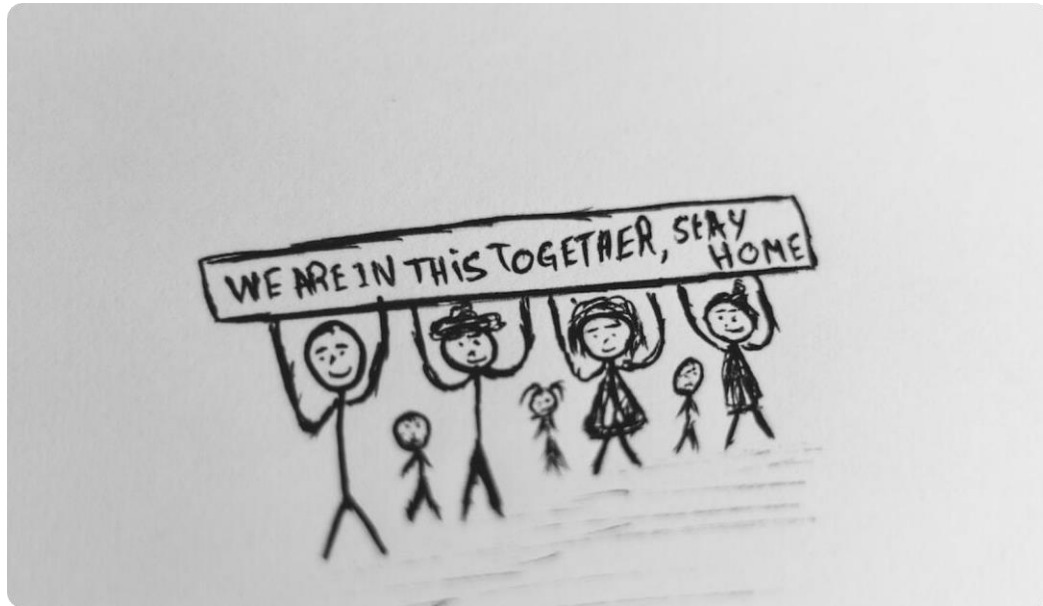


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Experience with Telework (Remote Work) I

In general

- + more flexible working hours, no need to commute to work
- less sharing with colleagues and possibility to build work relationships; hardship in finding balance between family and working life.

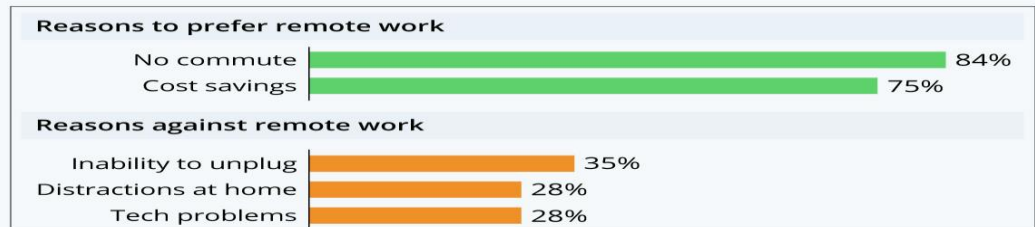
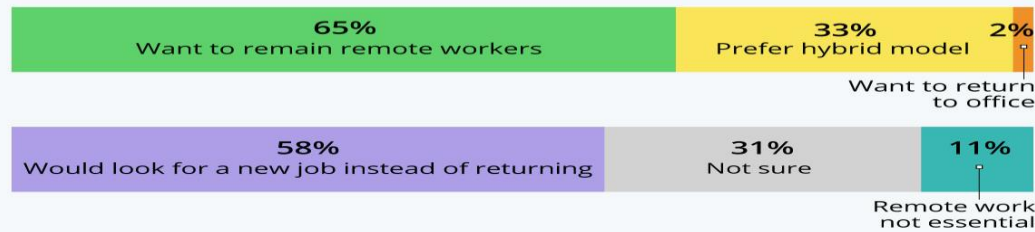
During COVID

- less stress when teleworking
- important difference between “stay-at-home with children” and “stay-at-home-without children”

Experiencing Telework (Remote Work) II

Workers Want to Stay Put in Home Office

Survey responses among workers who engaged in remote work during the pandemic (2021)



Opinion research institute IFES conducted a survey on working from home in May 2020.

- 58% of respondents stated that working from home had had a positive impact on their job satisfaction. 30% said there had been no change in their satisfaction levels, while only 12% identified negative effects.
- substantial majority of the respondents – fully 70% – said they would like to continue working from home more often after the pandemic
- the majority of employees in Austria would be happy to work from home one or two days a week (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2021)

Data from qualitative research (CoronaTimes 2020)

- semi-structured interviews recorded with 34 couples (interviewing each partner separately)
- residing in households with schoolchildren, including one family with same-sex parents
- 7 European countries—Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Sweden, and England
- April and June 2020

What were decisive factors influencing the experience of working from home?

- **Working Conditions - Organization of Work Hours:** The freedom to organize one's own time vs. the inability to choose working hours.
- **Working Conditions - The Need for a Dedicated Workspace:** Having a "room of one's own" to perform work.
- **Family Priorities:** Who is „more eligible" to gain space/time for working.
- **Employer's Approach:** Control over work organization is significantly influenced by the employer's attitude or the ability to create one's own working conditions (self-employed).

Working Conditions, Which Matter...

Physical Space: "A Room of One's Own"

- Personal space, an office at home, or an office outside the home.

Time Space: "They Leave Me Alone"

- Respect from those around you, recognizing a clearly designated time for work.

Mental Space: "Peace of Mind"

- Establishing your paid work as a priority, without needing to address family needs.

Positive Aspect of Homeoffice

- **"Time Savings"**

Time saved on commuting, unnecessary meetings, and small talk allows for more time dedicated to work and increased efficiency.

- *"... I managed everything from the home office, which everyone had switched to. And it worked well. I have to say I worked more intensively than I would have if I had been commuting to Prague and working in the office, where there are many distractions."*
(Lucie)

- **HOWEVER** does not apply when individuals lack both physical and mental "rooms of their own."

- *"Since this happened during the quarantine, it was also somewhat disrupted by the fact that, for example, you couldn't focus as much. So then you had to revisit things more often. There wasn't a clear boundary, like finishing work at 5:30 or 6:00. Instead, I ended up working until 6:00 or 7:00..."* (Hynek)

Gendered Eligibility

- **Women and Men Did Not Have Equal Access**

Even sufficiently large housing did not guarantee women their own space.

Women performed "emotional labor" to enable men to have a "room of their own":

- *"When work picked up, I started spending more time in the kids' room (...). Since I had a lot of calls, it was quieter there. So I would always shut myself in, disappear for at least a few hours, and then just check what was going on before disappearing again."*
(Hynek)
- *"It must be hard for him [working from home], and for me too (...). [When he works from home], I always feel like I have to keep the kids quiet so they don't disturb him."*
(Hermína)

Employers Attitude

- **Time Savings, but Increased Operating Costs for the Employee**

“...It’s standard that we can work from home. (...) On the other hand, the fact is that we don’t have systematic support for remote work. There are companies where, when they told people to work from home, they transferred fifteen thousand crowns into their accounts and said, ‘Just pay for your internet and electricity with this.’ (...). Last week, I paid four thousand to repair my own computer so I could work because it was in terrible shape. But I get different benefits for it—I have a lot of freedom, very little pressure, and plenty of room to plan things my own way.” (Lada)

■ ■ ■

- **Shift in Paradigm/Attitude**

“...It has definitely changed the attitude of companies towards home offices significantly. In our company, for example, the leadership views it as an option where the office can be a refuge for people with families who can't focus at home or have a small apartment... Many companies approach it this way, but at the same time, they've long made it clear that home offices are up to us. Even after the first wave [of the pandemic], I knew that if I stayed home three days a week, it would be seen as completely fine, and no one would bat an eye. And that's how it was, which is such a relief.” (Ronja)

- **As a Benefit**

“...But I get different benefits for it—I have a lot of freedom, very little pressure, and plenty of room to plan things my own way.” (Lada)

Different Organization of Work

- **Managers Had to Learn to Lead Teams and Assign Tasks in New Ways**
“...We had to learn to communicate remotely, also organizing work through a task-tracking system for the team. So we implemented that, we hadn’t used it before. Or we only used it partially.” (Hugo)
- **Long Online Meetings Are Exhausting**
“...You can’t really move much; which makes long meeting exhausting. When it’s a physical meeting, you can shift in your seat or step out to the restroom, relax. And you’re not staring at a monitor, which makes these virtual ones more tiring.” (Hugo)

Limited Communication

- **Limitations on Building Relationships Through Informal Contacts**

“...Those necessary, very necessary small talks over coffee, you know, or the occasional chat with someone. But it does break your focus a bit; it’s more about nurturing the atmosphere in the company and the people, which is part of my job responsibilities...” (Lucie)

- **Online Communication Is Not Always Effective**

“...Because of the quarantine, we couldn’t travel, so we actually ended up with a bit more work. We had to handle many things over the phone or on conference calls, which is a difference, because normally we would always travel to the Netherlands. When you’re there with all the people at once, you can usually get more things done faster.” (Hynek)

Main Takeaways

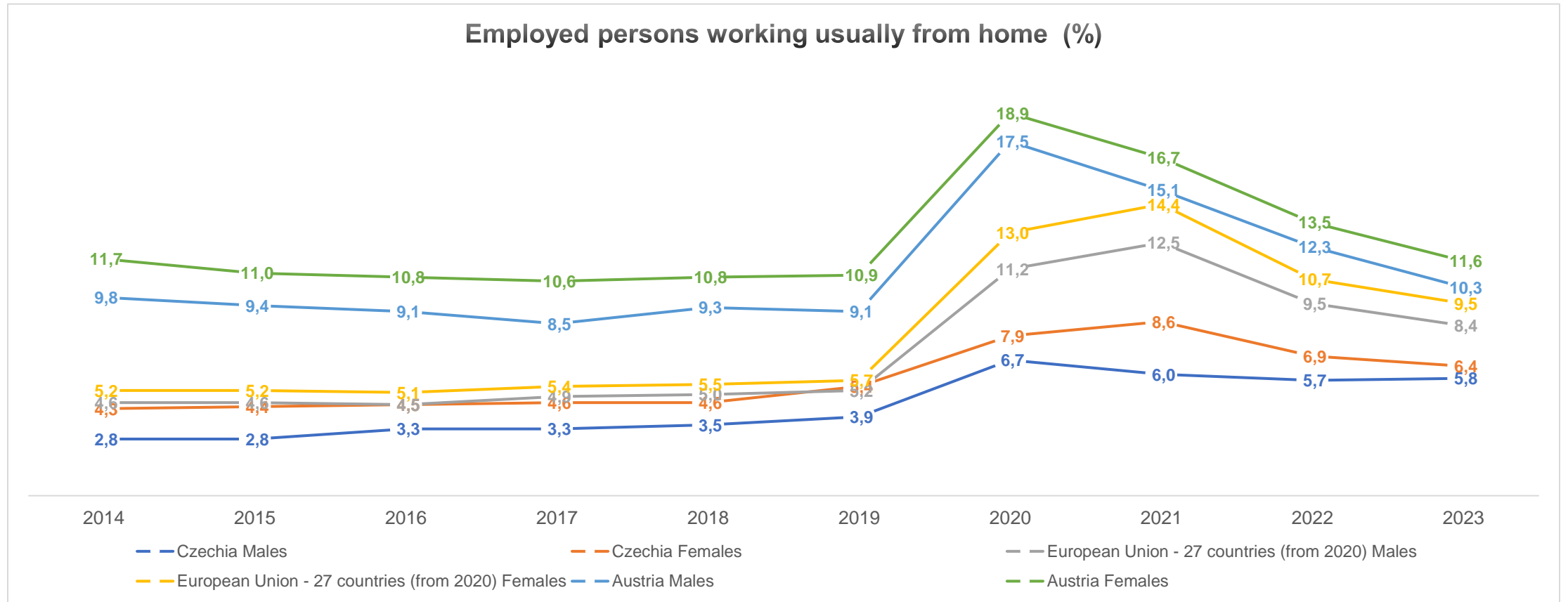
- People working from home, who were interviewed, experienced less stress, felt more support from employers, and had greater trust in the government. An important factor was that this was seen as a temporary protective measure.
- **HOWEVER**
In general, people working from home report:
 - **Blurred boundaries between personal and work life.**
 - **Reduced sense of feedback on performance from supervisors.**
 - **Decreased visibility and fewer opportunities for networking, which can weaken interpersonal connections as well as career progression.**
 - **Higher conflict between family/personal life and work, with the greater extent of remote work leading to a loss of control over time management.**
- **People with children at home experience significantly more negative and fewer positive feelings when working from home**, more stress, and a greater loss of control over their work compared to those without children. This was true both during and outside of the pandemic, especially due to the specific challenge of caring for school-aged children at home.

Post pandemic situation

WORKING REMOTELY



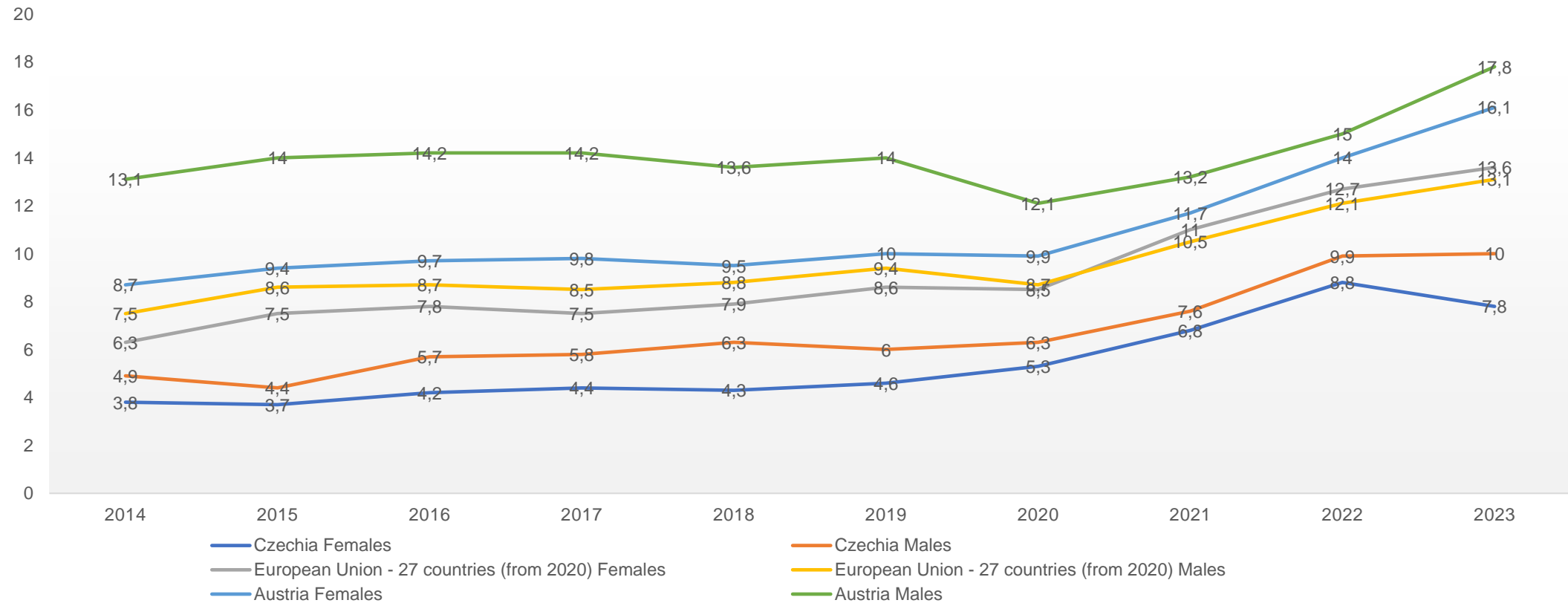
„Telework“ more prevalent in Austria



Source: Eurostat 2024

Occasional „telework“ by gender – male advantage

Employed persons working from home sometimes (%)



Policy Considerations

- Rights to Digital Skills/Access
- Rights to Work From Home (Telework)
- Rights to Disconnect

Ensuring that employees are protected from having to perform work outside their normal working hours.

The EU right to disconnect, currently being discussed in the European Parliament (European Parliament, 2021)

Digital working arrangements – legal framing



- Since 2021
- Home office
- Compensation of costs
- No legal entitlement
- By agreement, right to withdraw

- Arbeitsverfassungsgesetz (Labour Relations Act)
- Employment Contract Adaptation Act
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Austrian Datenschutzgesetz (Data Protection Act)

- Since 2023
- Home office/remote work
- Compensation of costs
- Entitlement: long term carers + caring for children under 9, pregnant
- By agreement, 15 days to withdraw

- Act No. 262/2006 Coll., the Labour Code.
- Act no. 299/2023 Coll.

Conclusion and Key Takeaways

- **Key changes in workplace organization:** The workplace policies and practices across Austria and the Czech Republic have been significantly influenced by digitalization, demonstrating both opportunities and challenges.
- **Importance of Flexibility:** Remote working is now recognized as an essential attribute of modern work arrangements.
- **Gender Disparities and Inclusivity:** The post-pandemic landscape highlights persistent gender disparities within labor markets, necessitating continued policy advocacy for equitable workplace structures.

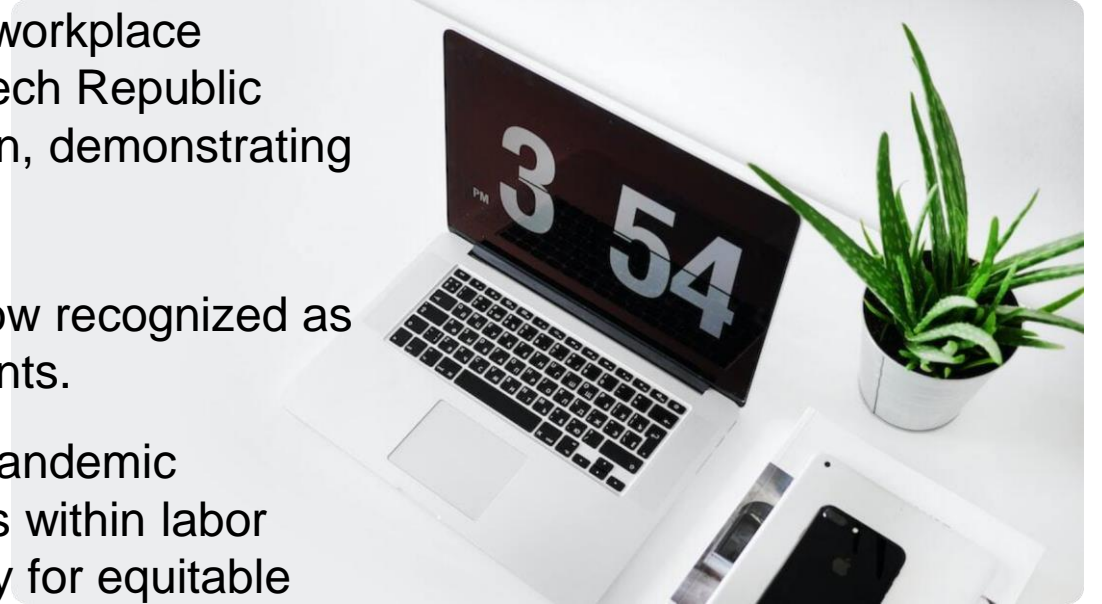


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Further reserach: Intersection of Multilocality and Digital Work



Remote Work Setups

Identifying advantages of remote work for both employees and employers, including enhanced productivity and flexibility.



Intersection of Multilocality and Digital Work

Discussing hurdles like isolation, lack of community engagement, and professional boundaries.



Employee and Employer Perspectives

Exploring how workplace flexibility and digitalization influence social attitudes and professional expectations.