Research on working conditions of work from home in Montenegro

Focus group analysis

April, 2022

Basic information

Name: De Facto Consultancy
Address: 8. marta 55, 81000 Podgorica, Crna Gora
Telephone number: +382 67 226 392
E-mail: office@defacto.me
Website: www.defacto.me; msslab.defacto.me

DEFACTO CONSULTANCY

Content

Introduction 2
Methodology 2
Analysis 3
General impressions 3
Work habits 8
Work conditions 14
Annexes 21
Annex 1: Profile of the participants 21

Introduction

The sudden closure of many offices and jobs in 2020 opened a new era of teleworking for many Montenegrin employees. The epidemic of the COVID-19 virus foreshadowed a significant change in the way much of the workforce will work in the future. Now, over two years after of the introduction of work from home in Montenegro, the limitations and advantages of this type of work have become clearer.

The transition to teleworking was relatively easy for some of the employees covered by the survey. Among the interlocutors in the research who have worked from home most or part of the time so far, many of them stated that they had the appropriate technology, work equipment and adequate work space. Some also say that it was easy for them to meet deadlines and complete work obligations on time. However, the interlocutors also mentioned numerous problems and shortcomings that they encountered, the most common of which were balancing between private and business life, unproductivity, feelings of alienation and the like.

Some of the interlocutors would like to maintain a hybrid way of working in the future, while the other part of the interlocutors, due to the sensitivity of the profession they are engaged in, say that they prefer to work mainly from the employer's premises. We tried to test the issues related to productivity, organization of work from home, working conditions and the relationship with the employer on a group of employees who come from the telecommunications sector, banking and education.

Detailed impressions, suggestions and comments will be processed in the following pages of the report.

Methodology

The research we conducted is of a qualitative type and consists of three focus groups. Given their qualitative nature, focus groups allow researchers to look beyond the facts and numbers that can be obtained from quantitative research - in this case, researchers can see certain meanings and opinions behind the facts and explain them more closely.

The division of participants by focus groups was done in relation to the type of activity of the interlocutor. These groups were

divided into a group of employees in the telecommunications sector, a group of employees in the banking sector, and a third group that brought together education workers.

Twenty interlocutors took part in the research through focus groups. Focus groups were organized on April 13 and 14, 2022, via the Zoom platform. Each of the focus groups lasted between 110 and 140 minutes and had 6 to 7 participants of different socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, level of education, etc.) in order to express in groups the views of representatives of different experiences.

Group conversations are systematized through the following topics: General impressions of working from home, work habits that determine how productive employees were, how they organized time and other segments related to their daily activities and finally working conditions that include impressions of interlocutors about the relationship with the employer, the problems and the conditions in which they worked. A cross-section of findings and recommendations can be found in the conclusions of the research itself.

The goal of the research team is not to quantify, but to understand the perceptions and attitudes of workers who have been working from home for some time since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. We would like to underline that the information we gathered during the focus groups was the attitudes, opinions, beliefs, assessments and impressions of the people we spoke to. These personal views are in line with the individual experiences of the interlocutors.

Our analysis focuses on a range of topics, broadly categorized in three areas: general impressions, work habits, working conditions, and problems.

Analysis

General impressions

In the introductory part of the research, we talked with our interlocutors about the intervals in which they worked from home from the beginning of the pandemic until today. We were also interested in whether it was a continuous period or whether they combined work from home and work from the employer's premises.

The answers of the interlocutors can be divided into two groups. The first group are the interlocutors who stated that they worked exclusively from home for a long period of time, after which they returned to work from the employer's premises. The intervals in which they worked range from 2 months to up to 2 years.

"I worked continuously for a year and 7 months, without a single day of work from the bank in the meantime." (N5, banks)

Another group of interlocutors stated that after the mitigation of measures against the spread of infectious diseases, they worked alternately from home and from the employer's premises, in teams. While some worked from home, others worked from the employer's premises, in order to respect the current measures to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. In addition, it is important to note that the interlocutors stated that they had the right to choose.

"So, I work at those intervals when the company decided that it is possible to work from home, so it is a year and three or four months in total for sure, if you add up in these two years since this pandemic. Close to a year and a half for sure that we worked from home at various intervals". (N4, Telecommunications)

"In the beginning, the whole service worked from home. And later, after half a year, some colleagues were already asking to come back and we came back in groups. After that, the next wave that took place, and we organized ourselves to work in groups per week, one group worked one week, the next another".(N7, Telecommunications)

"... so we needed to come and I had periods when I came to the office, when I worked from home and so I changed my coming to work so to suite us all. But there were also colleagues who said that they had not come to the office for almost 2 years. It was easier for me to work a little from home and come to the office a little".(N2, banks)

Some interlocutors explain that the work was performed from the employer's premises when a certain type of work required it, and mainly due to communication with clients.

"As teams, we took turnes. We had to work from the bank because we work with clients and then someone had to take over that part when it comes to the work with clients. When we didn't work with clients, then we could work from home". (N4, banks)

Interlocutors from the education sector mostly worked from home in the first phase of the pandemic, then, as the conditions of the pandemic dictated, they switched to combined work from home and in classrooms or offices. According to them, tests of knowledge and practice were done in cabinets and classrooms. The combined model of work has remained until today, when due to the condensed calendar, backlogs or shortening of classes, they have to transfer part of their obligations through online classes.

„Well, it's been 2 years since the coronavirus started, since February 2020, it seems to me that it all started. With some generations it lasted almost two years. What had to be done was that knowledge tests were done in the classroom directly, i.e. colloquia and other

knowledge tests. Some practical work, professional practice, as it would be allowed, within those limits".(N2, Education)

"In elementary school, it's quite similar to college. We worked continuously. Especially the first 2, 3 months, when the corona-virus began. Later, we combined that with consultations and, of course, knowledge testing. So we worked online for 30 minutes in the morning and went to consultations every day in the afternoon. "(N6, Education)

We can conclude that the interlocutors from education mostly had a similar rhythm of work with the exception of interlocutors who worked with younger children and that they mostly worked exclusively from home for a period and then all switched to a combined form of work involving cabinet work, classroom and work from home.

In order to see in more detail what the general impressions of the interlocutors are about working from home, we asked them whether they would work from home in the future or from the employer's premises if they had the right to choose. We were also interested in what reasons support their choice.

Interlocutors from the banking sector generally state that the combination of work from the employer's premises and occasional work from home is an ideal solution. Interlocutors from the telecommunications sector generally state that they prefer to work from the employer's premises, with certain exceptions. In that part, the interlocutors who explain that they would like to work from home sometimes, state that they were able to work in a relaxed environment, and that their work did not prevent them from traveling. However, talking about the positive aspects of working from home also mentioned some shortcomings, such as the impossibility of creating a working atmosphere.

"My work from home was reduced to, during the summer season, to working from the beach for example, which the employer would not otherwise approve." (N2, Telecommunications)

"During the summer, I was in Budva all summer, but I worked from home. So, I could have been on the beach in the morning or in the afternoon, but I was not in Podgorica. That part is to say some convenience, a benefit, but as for work itself… in the office a man is not normally in a tracksuit all day, somehow that part is already different in terms of the official circumstances, it means that one somehow knows that they have a work obligation". (N7, Telecommunications)

„What I would conclude is that the combination of work from home and work from the office suits me, but it seems to me that it is better

and for the communication it is better when most of us is at the department and the bank, and one week a month I need to work from home if necessary". (N2, banks)

All interlocutors from the education sector generally agreed that methods of working from home can be applicable to achieve better results in work as a solution in situations where conditions do not allow for live teaching.

„So the combined method, I applied it a little before the coronavirus began. "Study at home" is a nice idea, but not because of the coronavirus, but because I thought that something like that should be done because students who miss classes can make up for it, because it is known that we have professors who can miss out. And then we would be able to compensate for it in an adequate way, so that this combined method, especially to record material, and later contact whether live and zoom to be used for a conversation rather than for a classic lecture, to check what someone understood because one thing is what we tell and another is what they understand ... " (N1, Education)

„I would choose a combination of both, definitely in the future ..." (N5, Prosvjeta)

Those interlocutors who would like to work from home again at certain intervals, stated that the balance between business and private obligations is easier to achieve while working from home. However, the other part of the interlocutors considers the opposite. We will discuss more about business and private obligations in the next chapter of the report.

"The balance between family and work is easier to make when you work from home." (N2, Telecommunications)

Among the negative aspects of working from home, due to which the interlocutors choose to work from the office, are poor communication and the feeling of alienation from colleagues.

"I would say for some things that working from home makes it easier to balance with some family obligations, flexibility and at the same time be as efficient as working in the office. On the other hand, it is better to exchange opinions with colleagues live and it is easier to solve a problem when it is done live than by phone". (N4, Telecommunications)

Interlocutors who said that the nature of their work requires frequent communication not only with colleagues but also with clients, stated that they were forced to work from the employer's premises in the future, adding that a potential combined model would sound tempting.

„Most of us have direct contact with the clients, and then precisely because of that, we cannot condemn some colleagues to work with the clients all the time and the rest of us to work from home. But I think that combined model could work well".(N4, banks)

The interlocutors generally agree that work from the employer's premises is more productive, and that they are aware of this fact, stating that in the combined mode of work, work from the employer's premises would predominate.

„I think we are all more productive when we work from the office, not when we work from home. We have many fewer distractors, but it is good that, for example, in our bank there is a possibility that we continue to work from home for a certain period of the day during the months".(N5, banks)

One part of the interlocutors explicitly decided to work from the office, and the reasons for that are the impossibility of balancing private and family obligations with business, lower productivity and a sense of isolation.

"I would not. Because I disturb the whole family, and also working from the office is much easier when we are focused on the work itself and all these events, everything is closer and clearer and when a problem arises it is always much faster to solve it when we are in direct contact with colleagues. (N7, Telecommunications)

"Somehow a man spends more energy at work, which is natural, it's a positive thing, but at home a man gets a little lazy, to be honest. I think working from the office is a better option". (N5, Telecommunications)

The interlocutors mostly agree that work from the employer's premises is much more productive. However, taking into account the advantages and benefits of working from home, they stated that it would be ideal for them if they could sometimes work from home at shorter intervals.

We received interesting comments from those working in education, who paid great attention in the conversation to the profession itself and the sensitivity of younger students to online teaching. Interlocutors working as teachers with younger children agreed that working from home would be an additional activity only. The reason for that is the complexity of the interaction that working with children of that age implies.

„I have to say that simply with small children, with younger ages, live class is irreplaceable. We certainly need to have complementary and extra activity, so we need to have that too, but only a very small part because of their age, but I think the live class is irreplaceable at lower ages...."(N4, Prosvjeta)

We conclude that all interlocutors from the education sector agree that live work is irreplaceable, but also about certain benefits that work from home brings. The reason is that by the nature of work, there are many situations in which working from home is not a completely adequate way to transfer knowledge. As an example, they state: exercises, experiments, field work, learning through socialization, etc. In the end, all the interlocutors agreed on the benefits of combined work, and that working from home could be useful in many situations.

We can conclude that the general impressions of all interlocutors are diverse and that they are influenced by the job description and personal habits and organizational skills of the interlocutors. While one part of the interlocutors exclusively choose work in the employer's premises, citing poor organization, matching private and business obligations as problems of work from home, the other part of the interlocutors emphasize the benefits of flexibility during work from home, and states that in the future wanted to work from home at certain shorter intervals.

The next set of questions refers to the work habits of the interlocutors. In this context, we wanted to talk in more detail with our interlocutors about productivity and organization of work from home. We were interested in how the interlocutors coped with deadlines and obligations, how they felt working from home, whether they felt alienated from the work team, whether they used breaks and whether they felt some pressure from to work outside of working hours, not to be productive enough and the like.

Work habits

When it comes to productivity and results of work from home, the answers of the interlocutors ranged from high unproductivity, through equal productivity as in the employer's premises, and even better and more successful results during the work from home.

Interlocutors who stated that they were less productive working from home, explain that the technical possibilities are much better in the office, that deadlines are easier to meet and that the feeling of working atmosphere during work from home is disturbed due to family and private environment.

> *I am less productive than at home but I spent more time working.*
> *(N7, Banks)*

The interlocutors state that the work environment is extremely important for productivity. Also, collective problem solving and

direct consultations of employees at the employer's premises enable better and more successful work results.

"As for the atmosphere at work, since we are in open space, communication is better, whatever happens with a conversation is easier to finish. It is much better and more practical when working from the office than from home. We also had the opportunity to choose and now we are all here.
(N6, Telecommunications)

"Working from home is much harder than working from offices ... it was simply not possible to adequately ensure that something gets completed properly within the set deadlines, it is not possible to adequately access the applications themselves, it is not possible to adequately access the workstation to speed it up as we are used to while we are there on site."(N7, Banks)

One interlocutor explains that productivity in the form of sales results was somewhat lower than during work in the employer's premises. The interlocutors further point out that working on more large monitors enables easier work than when working at home on a laptop.

"First of all, when we are at home, there must be more monitors, there must be more computers, and because sometimes things are simply not even feasible, and then some omission can happen."
(N6, Telecommunications)

All interlocutors from the education sector assessed their work from home as productive, while one part of the interlocutors had objections regarding the organization of time. The two interlocutors who work with younger children point out that they had to subordinate all their personal obligations and hire additional logistics and work assistance in order to successfully perform their work obligations and achieve satisfactory results.

"I was non-stop on the computer or the phone, believe it or not, non-stop! In contact, both with parents and children, non-stop, it was so hard and difficult for me, I could hardly wait to return to the classroom because at a younger age it is very hard…"
(N4, education)

One part of the interlocutors from education pointed out that he had to subordinate their private obligations and free time in order to make an additional effort to achieve that productivity. The results of working from home are more visible for interlocutors who have worked with older children and students than for those who have worked with younger children.

The interlocutors also commented the issue of mood during work, postponing obligations and tendency towards laziness. From the banking sector, they state that they have not postponed their

obligations due to the nature of the work that must be completed immediately.

"Considering that what we do in terms of payment transactions must be completed now and immediately, and these are mostly things that do not take much time, I could not postpone something or leave it for tomorrow, but I am equally, at least in the beginning while, when the pandemic started... in my opinion, I worked equally productively both from home and from the office."

Some interlocutors explain that working from home made them feel more responsible and that they were more productive, as another reason for greater productivity at home they state that it was easier for them to focus. One interlocutor explains that he works in an open space at the employer's place where there are constant distractions, conversations between employees, and the like, and this makes it impossible for him to focus sufficiently on his work. He also explains that much less time is spent getting ready for work and transportation to and from work, which he sees as a benefit of working from home.

"For many things, I was much more productive from home than from the office. For two main reasons. The first is that while I was working from home, somehow I felt guilty if I didn't do more than what I do in the office, and the second is that at least with us it's like an open space and there are always people there, someone passing by, something's happening, there's always something that will draw my attention and if it is not difficult for me. On the other hand, much less time is wasted when working from home, in terms of getting ready, going to work, parking, arriving, and so on." (N3, Banks)

When talking about productivity, the interlocutors mentioned the working atmosphere. In this regard, we were interested in how they managed to maintain a balance between private and business obligations while working from home. The comments and impressions of the interlocutors varied. While part of the interlocutors was successful in balancing all obligations, the other part encountered problems.

"I had children. It wasn't a problem for me at the very beginning, maybe a little until I got organized, and then the adjustment went smoothly for me." (N3, Banks)

"I don't have children and it was somehow easier for me to balance my obligations when I worked from home, while the biggest crisis was around April and May, I organized myself from 7 to 7 and 45 I go and catch a circle in the park, I go to Gorica and then I come and start working, and I can't do that when I go to the office." (N2, Banke)

We concluded that it is easier for all interviewees from the banking sector to reconcile private and business obligations from home.

From the telecommunications sector, the answers were somewhat different. The interlocutors who say that they have children, explain that especially because of business calls, which are very frequent, they somehow disturbs the whole family.

"Working from home is quite demanding in terms of organizing the whole family. This condition of working from home disturbs the whole family. So it disturbs children, then if someone has a spouse, parents and everyone else."
(N7, Telecommunications)

Regarding work habits, which is very important for productivity, we asked the interlocutors if they used breaks. The interlocutors generally stated that the breaks were relatively useless, especially in the period when there were extremely strict measures to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. They explain that their break would consist of reading a book, having lunch or the like, but again being close to the laptop so that the work was somehow always in the background.

The interlocutors agreed that they used the breaks more when working from the employer's premises. So, during working hours, disconnection was not possible, as explained by the interlocutors.

"...I used breaks as breaks in the sense of sitting at the laptop, reading a book or watching a series on another laptop, but my work was always there in the background, so I actually didn't use a break, I was still available."
(N5, banks)

The interlocutors add that they felt a certain level of stress and pressure, because they were unable to completely disconnect from work even for 20 minutes, because, as they state, they are in contact with their colleagues even while having lunch near the laptop.

"I would tell my colleagues that I would switch off for about 20 minutes - half an hour and I would use that time to prepare something to eat, but then again, if someone calls me, my laptop is there, I often found myself in situations where I was having lunch and my laptop was standing there and that I'm typing something at the same time, that I'm responding to someone. It really annoyed me because I can't take 20 minutes to eat something in peace. So, I took fewer breaks when I worked from home." (N2, Banks)

"It's the same case with me, so I've caught myself so many times that when I'm having breakfast or lunch, I'm checking emails on my phone." So, it was already a big problem for me because I didn't manage to find time for a break at all." (N7, Banke)

"I use breaks far more when I'm in the office than when I'm at home." (N3, Banke)

Somewhat less often, we heard from the interlocutors that they used breaks while working from home.

"Just like at work, I use the breaks prescribed by law. It has to be simple, it is natural for a person to take advantage of that break, because it is not a passive job where a person is available on call, but an active job, something is constantly being done." (N5, Telecommunications)

In this part, we conclude that the interlocutors generally used more breaks while working from the office. One interlocutor explains that he took the children to kindergarten and used it as a break. And considering that he lives further away from his workplace, he stated that he would normally use it as a break while working at the employer's premises and that it would take him 30 to 40 minutes in that case.

The interlocutors repeatedly mentioned a change in mood and a certain pressure as well as stress that manifested itself when working from home. We were interested in whether the interlocutors felt pressure from their superiors to have to work outside normal working hours, that they did not have the right to disconnect after the end of working hours.

The interlocutors explained to us that they subconsciously felt pressure, which they did not feel while working in the employer's premises. As they state, while they were working at the employer's premises, they had some supervision and believed that they were productive, however, working from home, they wondered if the employer was skeptical about their work and performance, although in no way was this told to them directly. Also, some interlocutors stated that they felt pressure after working hours from their colleagues, which was demonstrated by communication and completing tasks after normal working hours.

"I subconsciously had that feeling. (N5, Banks)

"No one forced me... in principle, no one pressured me or exerted any influence on me to stay longer, to work more or anything like that." (N3, Banks)

"Not from superiors, but regularly from colleagues." (N6, Banks)

One of the interviewees, who works as a teacher with younger children, pointed out that working from home has grown into an all-day activity. Due to the demanding nature of performing her

duties with children aged 6 to 9 years and the fact that part of that methodology has remained to this day.

" However, those Viber groups remained relevant for supplementary and additional classes when we needed them for a while because the classes were shortened... First of all, I have to say that at first we didn't manage very well either, and then we moved on, I started working at eight o'clock and it happened that I finished at 10 in the evening... This year it's different now, so those Viber groups work better, parents can even post questions, but in a certain period of time... But at the very beginning, it was a disaster, we were in vain insisted that it be finished by 6, for example, but some parents who work until later sent their messages later, so I had problems (N6, Education)

The atmosphere, they say, is much better in the employer's premis-es. Working from home "suffocated" many interlocutors and made them feel that they never leave their "home office".

"I don't know, I just didn't like the whole atmosphere. I had the conditions, but I had the feeling that I should get out of bed, go to another room and work. It wasn't completely natural for me and it really tired me out. I returned to the office on my own accord, I asked to be sent back and it's much easier for me, indescribable." (N3, Telecommunications)

"I was suffocated by that work from home. As I close my laptop, I'm still in an office and there's still some work around me and my users are still in the living room. So it's much easier for me to work from the office."(N1, Telecommunications)

We asked the interlocutors if they felt socialized, given that they were distant from the work team. The interlocutors generally state that working from home and the pan-demic generally had a negative impact on socialization. From the banking sector, they even stated that they saw their new colleagues for the first time after several months of working from home when they came to the office and that they felt like they were on their first day at work.

"I am. I was the first one who couldn't wait to come back, precisely and exclusively for that reason." (N3, Banke)

"I felt somehow undefined, we write e-mails here but there is no live communication and that's why I always liked to come to work from the office... we got a lot of new colleagues. They came to a situation where they don't know anyone anymore, they don't know who their colleagues are, and that a was kind of bad feeling. That's the advantage of working from the office." (N2, Banks)

The interlocutors explained that communication via phone, email or Zoom could not replace the advantages of live communication with colleagues.

"I had the situation that for 11 months I was in communication with people every day via e-mail and phone, and I didn't know what they looked like." (N5, Banke)

"I am quite active like this, I like to move, I like to meet people." All that was missing from home and that is the aspect that bothered me the most. Because after a long time it starts to be somewhat monotonous and it's much more interesting and lively working from the office, something is happening." (N3, Banks)

From the above, we can conclude that many interlocutors are more communicative by nature and that working from home meant for them a social disconnection from the work collective, which as a result had a constant unpleasant accompanying feeling, and in connection with that, they wanted to return to the employer's premises. It is obvious that working from home made the interlocutors relatively unsocialized but also anxious, which is confirmed by their impressions of the pressure they subconsciously felt even after working hours.

Work conditions

The research team tried to find out the conditions under which the interviewees worked from home. In this context, we asked them if they had the necessary office equipment.

The interlocutors generally state that they had appropriate equipment, but which cannot be compared with the equipment in offices. As they state, an office desk and chair as well as large monitors are some things that are better in the office than at home. While the interlocutors from the banking sector used laptops owned by the employer, the other interlocutors exclusively used their own equipment.

"We all had a laptop that is the property of the bank and which, even though I have not returned it, I still have the ability to access the system whenever I want." (N7, Bank)

Some interlocutors did not have the necessary equipment in the initial phase of working from home, and after a few months they bought the necessary tools for work at their own expense, such as a suitable office chair, monitor, and the like.

"For instance, I didn't have an adequate chair for two months, I worked on the couch, and that was a mental and physical strain for me. After a certain time, I literally bought a big TV and attached a computer to the TV and provided all that so that I could have somewhat normal productivity, especially as someone who works with a lot of data, and that helped me a lot." (N7, Banks)

Some interlocutors explained that it is easier for them to work from the office due to the possession of several large monitors,

and one interviewee requested the employer to get a monitor in order to work more productively.

"Some colleagues asked for a monitor and they were provided with a monitor that they had at their workplaces. They asked to take it and use it from home, without any problem, literally, with a signature, of course." (N7, Banke)

"As far as I'm concerned, I had the conditions to work from home." It's a bit specific in our business because quite often more than one monitor and a large area are needed to monitor the entire network. But basically yes, anything is doable. For example, instead of a pair of monitors, a television can be used." (N1, Telecommunications)

Some interlocutors add that they had additional equipment in the office, such as professional headphones, which they did not have at home. As the interlocutor states, not having that equipment meant difficult work.

"We already have the complete network set up in the offices, special headphones and everything, and at home we received laptops with completely different headphones, with a slightly weaker network with a VPN that interrupted every now and then, so the conditions were somewhat bad for us. So, frankly, I didn't like it at all, it annoyed me." (N1, Telecommunications)

Some interlocutors mentioned that they expected the employer to pay certain costs such as electricity bills, but that they did not do it.

"I personally believe that no employee had decent working conditions from home." (N2, Telecommunications)

However, one interviewee explains that the benefits of working from home, such as flexibility, can compensate for the lack of equipment.

"Inadequate monitors, distance from the monitor, maybe an inadequate chair or something like that that is somehow negligible because compared to what you get for that short period, and you get flexibility, work from home, greater freedom." (N5, Telecommunications)

According to employees in the education sector, the employer generally did not provide adequate equipment. Some of the interlocutors who are employed in schools encountered numerous problems regarding equipment, because the work did not depend only on the equipment they have, but also on the one owned by the students and the Internet, which was not provided by the education system.

„I believe that the conditions were not very good... especially some children did not have the conditions or technical equipment to follow... there were children who could not pay for the internet, I specifically did not have such a case, but I have a colleague who paid internet every week for one child who was not able to pay fo r it..." (N4, Education)

Some of our interlocutors pointed out that this also represented additional costs for them, because often school employees personally helped to fix these problems and spent extra effort and engagement.

"Here I have to say, the medics had masks and gloves and everything, and we knew that we were buying everything, you understand that, it's just some attitude of society towards education itself." (N6, Education)

We can conclude that the interlocutors from the education sector did not have access to adequate equipment and working conditions provided by the employers or the education system as a whole, and all the interlocutors expressed their displeasure on this matter.

One group of employees, from the banking sector as well as some from the telecommunications sector, stated that they used a laptop owned by the employer but that they provided all the other equipment themselves.

When it comes to the bearing of costs by the employer, the answers of the interviewees were the same, stating that they themselves bore the costs of electricity and internet. One group of interlocutors from the telecommunications sector only stated that they had a discount on the internet as company employees.

„... somewhere they could at least participate in that part of the internet and electricity." (N4, Banks)

The research team asked the interlocutors if they had signed a specific act that regulated working from home more closely, and in order to have additional insight into the conditions and circumstances of work.
The interlocutors from the telecommunications and education sectors unanimously declared that they did not sign any act that more closely defines and regulates working from home.
The interlocutors from the banking sector state that they did sign the document, stating that they are not sure exactly how the document is legally qualified, with the assumption that it could be consent or a decision.

"We signed some kind of agreement. It was also stated that this part is for us to bear the costs of electricity and internet. It didn't bother me either." (N3, Banke)

We also talked with the interlocutors about overtime work, that is, we asked them if the employer was abusing the fact that they work from home, requiring them to be available even after normal working hours. The interlocutors state that they did not have direct pressure from their employer or superior, but that they felt the pressure themselves subconsciously, constantly questioning whether they were productive enough.

"And that motive of responsibility, that you don't have classic control, you are not seen by your superiors or by anyone there, somehow they pull you and hold you by the chair." (N6, Banks)

Although the employer did not directly demand that the interviewees work outside of working hours, they stated that they often found themselves in a situation of working before or after working hours. Some interlocutors also worked on non-working days.

"Somewhere, I think we were all at our laptops before 8, and I never switched off at 4 when my working hours with the laptop ended, but I stayed to work." I didn't even look at the time until maybe 5 o'clock when I was working from home. Another thing, even though we don't work on Saturdays, on Saturdays sometimes when a customer came to the bank and needed to withdraw part of the money from the account, we often logged in and worked on Saturdays for some time that we would not have worked if I had worked at the bank because for us it is Saturday is a non-working day." (N4, banks)

"Somehow, the office is easily accessible from home, so it's much easier for a person to decide to log in from home and do something even though it's outside of his working hours." So that effect really exists, at least for me to confirm." (N3, Banke)

Some of the interlocutors from the education sector highlighted the pressure from parents, students and the public.

"Yes, we are from parents and students, but we all really worked hard at my school." (N6, Education)

All interlocutors from the education sector stated that they were always available for overtime work, additional teaching or consultations. They note that by working from home, they are much more exposed to work and have more engagements, work obligations and hours that are not counted at all.

"It was terribly tiring and difficult until they connected them and plus, I repeat, even if the classes were over and we moved to the classroom and simply because the reduction in the duration of the classes required that we have to work with them additionally online... We never had any compensation for effort and work..." (N3, Education)

Some of the interlocutors from the education sector pointed out that they made extraordinary efforts and expressed the fear that it is not valued adequately, in every sense. It was often the case with our interlocutors that they work and are available during the day, adding that none of that is counted as overtime and their engagement and free time is exposed to abuse.

One interlocutor pointed out that she got into unpleasant situations because some parents abused the possibility of direct contact. She also felt pressure due to the responsibility she has towards her students, for whom, unfortunately, the education system did not provide adequate attending the classes, which affected her emotionally.

"I felt pressure from some parents in terms of... I constantly felt the obligation to respond to those messages and calls... Not for the sake of negative comments... there is a different structure of people and social cases and I don't know. .. and there are children who don't even have technical capabilities, and then you feel that I, as part of the collective, because of the Roma population, feel the pressure that these children are not able to, I was disappointed at the system..." (N4, Education)

We conclude that the emphasis is not on the pressure of employers, but the pressure of the public or some third party against them as employees in a public institution. The kind of pressure they felt was partly on the work and private life of the interlocutors.

The interlocutors gave us their impressions of being informed about the employer's business decisions, stating that they held meetings via online platforms, but that they can really follow the events in the organization the fastest only when they work from the office.

"Mostly, they were notified, we have usual email communication and mostly all that information goes via email. We also have a website, we were informed about these important things, but unimportant things always happen "shu-shu" and that part was missing." (N2, Telecommunications)

In this context, the interlocutors explain that you learn more about things in the company only in mutual communication than in the employer's public address.

The interlocutors had the usual phone calls and email correspondence with their colleagues. They say that the flow of information is much faster when working together in the office than via phone, email or Zoom.

"And beyond work, that's true. It means that you call, that you ask for additional information, then something that was missed in that video call to be explained... that always happens." (N7, Telekomunikacije)

The interlocutors noticed that colleagues who worked from home in one period felt rejected, unlike those who worked from the office in that period.

We briefly talked about data protection while working from home, where some interlocutors mentioned that their data was protected in a special way, through a VPN, and that it could not be compromised. On the other hand, some interlocutors were not sure about data protection.

At the end of the meaningful conversation, we asked the interlocutors for short recommendations that they would consider useful for any future work from home. The research team included the main recommendations that we concluded from the research in the following sub-chapter.

Conclusions with recommendations for improvement

The main conclusions of the discussion can be summarized in the following theses:

1. **Benefits of working from home**

- Flexible working hours,
- The possibility of balancing private and business life,
- Spending less time on transportation and preparing for work in the office,
- Work in a relaxed atmosphere,
- In less frequent comments, higher productivity and better organization of time.

2. **Problems and disadvantages of working from home**

- Lack of work and business environment and working atmosphere,
- Increased feeling of stress and fear of non-productivity or judgment from the employer,
- Overtime work and the inability to escape from the home office,
- Basic work equipment that does not correspond to the description of work duties,
- Tendency towards monotony and laziness, lack of work motivation,
- Reduced physical movement,
- Lack of exchange of experience and live communication with the work team.

3. Main recommendations for improvement

- Invest in equipment and logistics so that education can function smoothly and online, additionally equip educational institutions,
- Define solutions for the problems of working from home with a collective agreement,
- Pay overtime from home,
- Better legal regulation of working from home and overtime work,
- Support for the protection of employees,
- Improve communication and socialization among employees,
- Introduce the right to choose part-time work from home.

Annexes

Annex 1: Profile of the participants

Group	Code	Sex	Age	Education
FG_Telekom	N1	Female	37	BA
FG_Telekom	N2	Male	54	BA
FG_Telekom	N3	Female	40	SSS
FG_Telekom	N4	Male	58	BA
FG_Telekom	N5	Male	23	BA
FG_Telekom	N6	Female	23	BA
FG_Telekom	N7	Female	46	SSS
FG_Banks	N1	Male	40	BA
FG_Banks	N2	Female	26	BA
FG_Banks	N3	Male	41	BA
FG_Banks	N4	Male	45	BA
FG_Banks	N5	Female	26	BA
FG_Banks	N6	Female	48	BA
FG_Banks	N7	Male	41	SSS
FG_Education	N1	Male	51	PHD
FG_Education	N2	Male	N/A	BA
FG_Education	N3	Female	28	BA
FG_Education	N4	Female	50	BA
FG_Education	N5	Male	45	BA
FG_Education	N6	Female	42	MA