



# Guide to teleworking

## Social dialogue update

U4U took part in a dialogue organised by the DG HR for the reworking of the Teleworking Decision that came into force on 17 December of last year.

U4U supported the principle of greater access to teleworking for all functions for which it is feasible, without the need for prior consent, for a modern working environment based on trust and helping staff to reconcile their professional and private lives. U4U was particularly keen to eliminate inequalities in career progression and access to training for teleworkers, campaigning for a substantial increase in the number of days authorised for work based on circumstances and promoting a simplified and transparent approval system. The central idea of the mechanism being that the quest for the best possible working conditions that take account of the satisfaction and personal development of the agents could only help to guarantee results of the highest quality.

A guide was to be produced to ensure the uniform application at all of the Commission's sites of the advances made with regard to the conception and implementation of teleworking. The earlier period was characterised by the more discretionary application of this teleworking option, as well as by limited computer capacity and strong resistance from some elements of the management to managing staff remotely.

On 31 March of last year, there was a dialogue with the DG HR to complete this guide. This document firmly reminds the management that "there are very few functions at the Commission that cannot be performed by teleworking on a regular basis". This a real victory resulting from the dialogue, as it will now be difficult for management to refuse teleworking on the basis of the nature of the work. Indeed, article 1, para. 5 of the Teleworking Decision specifies those tasks that cannot be completed via teleworking. For staff involved in non-teleworking tasks (shift work, tasks related to receiving members of the public, drivers, catering, mail distribution, interpreting, technical and logistical support, support for crisis management and response missions, security, child care, medical service, etc.), U4U has requested the application of special leave to allow these colleagues the flexibility they might occasionally need to deal with personal issues and reconcile some of the rigidity associated with their functions.

U4U supported the increase in hours dedicated to circumstantial teleworking. It will now be possible to telework (from time to time) 60 days per year and even to combine this circumstantial teleworking with structural teleworking. On an exceptional basis (e.g. loss of mobility), it is possible for this number of days to be increased. Teleworking does not, however, take account of overtime hours that might be needed to complete an urgent job. At the request of U4U, the DG HR has agreed to consider granting special compensation leave to staff who, through teleworking at the request of their managers, are required to work a lot of hours over a few days in the interest of the service.

There must now be justifiable grounds for refusing an eligible teleworking request, and the DG HR is the guarantor for the equitable application of this new way of working within the Commission. The application procedure is simple, going through SYSPER, and is referred directly to the line manager. U4U invites all colleagues to submit their applications via SYSPER to avoid the unduly discretionary handling of their applications. To counter resistance by elements of the management, the DG HR has introduced "Manage people you cannot see" training courses, in which all management staff are requested to take part. A link is also planned to courses designed in a more personalised way to meet specific needs expressed by a manager.

Finally, U4U requested that the guide no longer contain any reference to technical/IT limitations that would reduce the amount of access authorised. DIGIT has worked hard to improve the performance of the computer system, and even the issue of 'tokens' will be simplified, as access via smartphone will be possible in the very near future. From now on, trust and the clear definition of the tasks, of the expected results and of the schedule for completion will guide the authorisation of teleworking. It is a sign of maturity on the part of our administration, which in recent years has lost sight of how many high-quality staff it had, instead focussing on cumbersome staff control procedures, which were applied indiscriminately to everyone and were therefore, by their very nature, expensive.

U4U can only welcome these advances, which reflect a desire to move towards a more modern form of human resource management, herald a dynamic and flexible approach to work organisation oriented towards the quality of the results, and which will improve the working comfort of staff penalised by the return to a 40-hour week and constrained by changes of location whose only objective was to reduce space and thereby make savings.

Update on 4 April 2016