



TWING PROJECT

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1. Introduction

1.1 Prevalence

COVID-19 has changed the way we work, more and more people work either remotely or by using a hybrid form combining remote and office work in Finland. Already before the pandemic era, knowledge-intensive occupations, such as ICT- and finance sectors were famous for working remotely in form of telework, i.e. outside the physical premises of the employer. However, access to equipment aimed for teleworking does not mean a self-evident interest towards remote work. Previous studies have shown how the popularity of telework in knowledge-intensive occupations has not been much higher than in other occupations, despite workers' greater possibility to choose remote work (Ojala & Pöyriä 2018). Sudden changes caused by the COVID-19 restrictions has required employers and social partners to re-negotiate the conditions for remote work (as it is called in the Finnish context). The current report explores recent telework arrangements in so-called "old and new" telework sectors, comprising of two sectors with a significant incidence of telework before the pandemic, namely in ICT (NACE 62) and the finance sector (NACE 64), and two novel telework sectors, where telework arrangements have only recently been introduced, namely the chemical sector (NACE 20) and the public sector (NACE 84). The report aims the answer the following questions:

1. How has the pandemic crisis impacted telework patterns in Finland and the four sectors covered in the research?
2. What has been the impact on employment and working conditions resulting from the transition to telework in the context of the pandemic and beyond?
3. How has the experience of extended telework since the outbreak of the pandemic been addressed in statutory legislation and national social dialogue in the selected countries?
4. How has the experience of extended telework since the outbreak of the pandemic been addressed in sectoral collective bargaining?

Attention has been paid to three core points during Finnish literature review comprising the time-period of 2017-2023. **First**, the focus is on national news and (scientific) publications related with the topic published after 01/2016. However, some international studies which include Finland have also been included because of their comparative nature. **Second**, key topics were 1. collective agreements, 2. policy documents, 3. laws and regulations, 4. policy documents and finally, social pacts and other representations by social partners. These key points were further narrowed to focus on "telework" and, or "COVID-19 or post- COVID-19". **Third**, in addition to the above-mentioned criteria we looked for sector specific information about the topics by focusing on the four industrial sectors included in TWING, namely: ICT consultancy, financial activities, chemical industries and public administration. **Additionally**, some of the reviews are found in the grey literature, comprising statements and policy papers, in particularly information received from trade unions and governmental expertise groups focusing on remote work and/or digitalisation and work life changes. During the search for reviews, the term "telework" was replaced by "remote work" (FIN: "etätyö") which is more common within the Finnish context.

Best search matches resulted from using sources such as google, google scholar and some Finnish data bases such as ARTO, and by exploring national scientific journals, e.g. Työelämän tutkimus (EN: "Worklife Studies") and looking for publications from the Finnish News Agency, STT. Only few studies were found from Scopus, Web of Science or similar international databases. In total 125 publications were found, however this number includes also national and international homepages focusing on

OHS and international comparative studies about telework and occupational health and safety. The number excludes MA-thesis based on custom orders by companies, e.g., local banks. Thesis comprising extensive literature reviews and, or innovative approaches were included. In general, it was possible to find only scattered information about remote work in the chemical industries and public administration. This can be explained by the novelty of telework in these sectors.

Several of the reviews had occupational health and security (OHS) as one of the core topics, however occupational security has received less attention in comparison of occupational well-being. Other topics related with telework are management and leadership, whereas the use of time has mainly been incorporated into occupational well-being studies. Bigger national studies have also explored and compared the frequency of telework in diverse sectors. In the news, the discussion of telework has been very scattered, and relating to other contemporary topics, such as lay off of employees, mental health, management, as well as the suitability of telework to different occupations. In general, news tries to catch the reader's attention and highlight more alarming or shocking phenomena than, for example, the smooth transition from office work to telework. The latter, in turn has been emphasised by the representatives of unions, as well as by respondents in telework surveys made by trade unions.

1.1.1 The evidence on the *changes* in the prevalence of telework and *composition* of the teleworking population since the outbreak of the pandemic crisis. To what extent telework has expanded to other sectors and occupations in which this work arrangement was not prevalent before the pandemic?

Since 2021, remote work or telework has been measured by Statistics Finland in a labor force survey by asking whether, in the last four weeks, you have worked at home all the time, at least half the time, less than half the time, or not at all. Previously, the question was asked whether during the last four weeks you worked at home regularly, occasionally or not at all. In the new remote work measurement, "regular" working at home is perhaps best understood as the sum of those working at home all the time, and those working at home half of the working time. These comprised 25 percent of all employed last year, i.e. the same number as those who regularly worked at home in 2020. Half of the employed never worked remotely at all. It should still be noted that although the Corona restrictions were almost completely removed during several months of the year 2020.

During COVID-19 the **share of teleworkers** increased drastically in Finland: in 2018 only 22% of employees teleworked occasionally, whereas the share increased to 47% in 2021. In 2021, 20% worked remotely, "weekly" 11%, "monthly" 5% and "occasionally" 11%. In year 2020, when the restrictions were reduced, the popularity of in-person work returned, however, not to the same level as before the restrictions. Returning to the office gained its popularity especially in health and social services and education. (Leskinen, 01.04.2022).

Before turning the discussion towards the four chosen sectors for the TWING project it is worth mentioning how telework took place in the public, private and municipal sectors in Finland. In 2020, 60% of employees in the **public sector** reported that they worked all or half of their working time at home. This sector comprises employees working for the Finnish government. The corresponding figure in the private sector was 26% and in the municipal sector 16% (Leskinen, 2022). In the **private sector**, 15 percent worked all their working time at home last year, and 11 percent worked at least half of their working time, or a total of 26 percent. In the private sector, there was little change in the prevalence of remote work, as in 2020 the share of those who regularly worked at home was 26

percent. In the **municipal sector**¹, remote work was less than the previous year, but more than before the corona virus. In 2020, there were 16 percent of people who regularly worked at home, and in 2019, about 10 percent. In the largest industries of the municipal sector, i.e. health and social services and education, close work has returned. (Leskinen, 2022).

in the past, telework **was done mainly by highly-ranking employees**, e.g. up to 41% of senior officers worked remotely in 2022, whereas the share was only 18 per cent among lower-level employees. Approximately half of government employees teleworked on daily bases, and 23% of the employees in private sector. Telework was less common in industry, where only 15% worked remotely. In municipalities the share was only seven per cent. (Lyly-Yrjänäinen 2023:49). The suitability of telework for work done by employees in higher occupational status is not novel; similar results were found already before the time of COVID-19 (Lyly-Yrjänäinen 2015; Perkiö-Mäkelä; Sutela and Lehto 2014)

The gender gap in telework has remained small. For example, in the year 2020, 25 percent of both men and women reported that they regularly worked at home. In the previous year, the corresponding share was 15 percent for men, 14 percent for women. There were 59 percent of men and 62 percent of women who did not work at home at all in 2020. The corresponding proportion in the previous year was 66 percent for men and 70 percent for women. (Leskinen, 2021).

The popularity of remote work has continued in most industries. It seems that even in those industries where working remotely has only been partially possible, new ways to work remotely have been found. For example, new remote practices have developed for customer work, which continue as ancillary forms of work even after the restrictions (Leskinen 01.04.2022). Employees seem willing to continue doing remote work after the corona period. Based on the national study 'Miten Suomi voi?' [How is Finland doing?] by Kaltainen & al. (2022), the majority (72%) of teleworkers have experienced remote work positively. In future, a combination of office and telework can replace traditional office work.

1.1.2 A summary of the existing evidence on the prevalence of telework since the outbreak of the pandemic crisis in the four sectors covered in the project drawing on social partners reports or available sources before and after the pandemic

The frequency to telework has increased drastically after the COVID-19 pandemic in the four sectors focused on in this report based on the outcomes of two studies: a survey conducted by the Trade Union YTN (in 2017 and a follow-up in 2021) and by Akava Works (in 2020). **Telework was not very common in any of the four sectors, before the pandemic, but has become frequent during it.** In the year 2020, the majority of the respondents worked remotely in ICT (75%) and finance (64%), whereas in public and defence sector 46% worked remotely. In chemical, only slightly more than one third (37%) were teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, also in the two sectors where remote work had been uncommon, it was now a common option. In chemicals, it was reported by 22% as being done 3-4 times days/week, in public and defence (by 14%), followed by ICT (10%) and finance (11%). Added together with respondents who reported working either mostly or entirely remotely with those working 3-4 days/ week remotely we see the following results for these sectors: ICT (85%), finance (75%), chemicals (59%) and public and defence (60%). During and since the COVID-19 pandemic, telework has become frequent in all four sectors, including sectors, such as chemicals and public sector, in which remote work was previously not common.

¹ The municipal sector comprises mainly of employees working with public services, such as child care and education (<https://www.kt.fi/en/municipal-sector-and-personnel>).

Before the pandemic, the majority of the respondents in these four sectors working ‘less than a day or not at all’ remotely was: ICT (54%), finance (61%), chemicals (75%) and in public and defence sector (69%). However, the percentage working remotely only 1-2 days/weeks was somewhat higher before the pandemic: ICT (30%), finance (30%), chemicals (20%) and in public and defence sectors (25%). (Akava Works 2020). There was a slight decline of telework during the third year of the pandemic. In 2021, ‘entirely or almost entirely telework’ was highest among ICT workers (56%), followed by finance (29%) and chemicals (22%). A considerable decline took place in finance from 64 to 29 %. Reasons for it require further study. There is no data about the public and defence sector because it was not included in the 2021 survey conducted by the Trade Union PRO.

How often do you telework?	ICT	Finance	Chemicals	Public and Defence
Before the pandemic: Entirely or almost entirely telework*	6	4	3	1
Before the pandemic: Telework 1-2 days/week*	30	30	20	25
During pandemic (in 2020): Only or almost only telework*	75	64	37	46
During pandemic (in 2021): Only or more or less only telework**	56	29	22	(No data)

(Sources: Akava Works*; YTN survey**)

Table 1. Frequency of telework in the four sectors under study

The occupational well-being and work satisfaction remained fairly stable before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey of Akava Works in 2020 showed that telework has not caused an increased work load or harmful burden to the respondents; in other words, the majority of the respondents found the work load to have remained the same. The same goes for harmful work burdens, such as stress and tight timetables. In the follow-up survey conducted by PRO in 2021, almost half the respondents were very satisfied (49 %) or somewhat satisfied with the telework arrangements (45%). The satisfaction to telework was highest among the respondents working in ICT (59,1 %) followed by finance (54,7 %) and chemicals (45,6 %), whereas somewhat satisfied respondents were in chemicals (47,1 %) followed by finance (40,4 %) and ICT (37,1 %). Following is a more detailed summary of the telework surveys conducted by Akava Works (in 2020) and by the Trade Union PRO (in the years of 2017 and 2021).

Akava Works survey 2020

In the year 2020, Akava Works made a survey about telework among their members working in ICT, finance, chemical and public and defence sector by focusing on the amount and frequency of telework, the increase or decrease in work load and possible increase of burden (stress and timetables). In total, 327 members replied to following questions:

Q1: How often do you telework in your current work?

Telework has become common during COVID-19 pandemic mainly in ICT (75%) and finance sectors (64%), whereas only 46% of respondents in the public and defence sector and 37% in chemicals replied they work ‘entirely or almost entirely telework’. Doing telework 3-4 times days/week was less common than in the other three sectors: ICT (10%), finance (11%) and public and defence (14%), whereas the percentage was higher in chemicals (22%). It can be stated that, **telework has become**

frequent in all four sectors, including sectors where it was uncommon, such as chemicals and the public sector.

Q2: How often did you telework before the COVID-19 pandemic?

Telework was not common in any of the four sectors before COVID-19 pandemic. Before the pandemic crisis the majority did telework only 1-2 days/week, i.e., in ICT (30%), finance (30%), chemicals (20%) and in public and defence (25%). Similarly, the percentages of respondents working 'less than a day or not at all' in ICT (54%), finance (61%), chemicals (75%) and in public and defence sector (69%). Instead, the percentage of respondents working 'entirely or almost entirely telework' were very low in the four sectors: ICT (6%), finance (4%), chemicals (3%) and in public and defence sector (1%).

Q3: Has your work load increased or decreased in comparison to the time before COVID-19 pandemic?

The work load of the workers in the four sectors has remained the same as before the pandemic: ICT (64%), finance (58%), chemicals (49%) and in public and defence sector (55%). Still, it is worth noting, a slight increase of work load in chemicals (32%) and public and defence sector (35%).

Q4: Have the following topics in your work either increased or decreased the harmful burden in comparison to the time before COVID-19 pandemic: hurry and tight timetables?

Similarly, **the respondents of the four sectors had not experienced any bigger changes of harmful burden**, such as increased stress or tight timetables, i.e., the majority replied the harmful burden of work remained much as before in ICT (57%), finance (60%), chemicals (56%) and in public and defence sector (56 %). The experience of somewhat greater or greater burden was highest among public and defence sector (29%), followed by chemicals (27%), ICT (23%) and finance (19%). However, less than 10 % in all four sectors claimed to have experienced a much greater burden than before pandemic.

YTN surveys in the years 2017 and 2021

In 2017, the Federation of Professional and Managerial Staff - YTN - sent a survey about the use of telework for its members working in ICT, finance and chemical sectors: 879 of 18 220 members replied. The survey focused on two topics, namely on the existence of telework arrangements in workplaces and respondents' opportunity and interest in teleworking. **Telework arrangements existed already in the majority (85%) of the three sectors during 2017, as well as the opportunities to telework, i.e., 77.1 % answered yes; 14,2 % replied "not even if I would like to" and 8,7 % for "I don't want to telework".** (A table can be added if needed; I can also roundup the % if needed)².

YTN sent a follow-up survey in 2021 for its members. In total, 25 709 members replied to it: Chemicals (1183), ICT (864) and from Finance (975). In the follow-up survey, the questions were somewhat modified and focused on employees' frequency to telework and on their satisfaction with the telework arrangements. To the question 'How often do you telework', 32 % of all YTN respondents replied 'entirely or almost entirely telework'; whereas 22,1 % reported telework 3-4 times a week, 20,3 % once or twice a week, 14,1 % only one entire working day, and 11,5 % the respondents replied 'not at all'. **In comparison to the Akava Work survey from 2020, the frequency of telework slightly decreased during 2021. In total 32 % of the respondents reported working mostly or entirely remotely, dominated by ICT with 56 % and followed by finance (29 %) and chemicals (22 %).**

² The survey conducted in 2017 consisted only of two questions focusing on the existence of telework arrangements and on the members opportunity telework. Telework arrangements were common among the respondents, 85 % replied positively for the question: "do you have telework at your working place", 12,7 % replied "no"; whereas 2,2 % "did not know". Similarly, for the second question: "Is it possible for you to telework?" 77.1 % answered yes; 14,2 % replied "not even if I would like to" and 8,7 % for "I don't want to telework".

The majority of the respondents were very satisfied (49 %) or somewhat satisfied with the arrangements (45 %). The satisfaction to telework was highest in ICT (59,1 %) followed by finance (54,7 %) and chemicals (45,6 %), whereas somewhat satisfied (47,1 %) respondents were in chemicals followed by finance (40,4 %) and ICT (37,1 %). **The percentage of unsatisfied respondents with the telework arrangements was very low: in chemicals 5,1 %; finance 1,0 % and ICT 0,6 %.** (A table can be added if needed).

2. Working conditions and main debates

2.1 Working conditions and telework in the national context

Discussion about telework, not only focusing on regulations, but also on its effect on employees' working conditions and well-being have been discussed on several occasions among the social partners during and after COVID-19. The discussion should be seen as part of broader labour market topic, namely on how digitalisation (and AI) impact the future of work or work in general. For example, already in the beginning of 2019, the biggest unions (the Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions (SA), the Confederation of Finnish industries (EKK) and the Office for the Government as Employer (VTML)) agreed on the core principals concerning digitalisation and artificial intelligence in working life. The unions stress the importance of upskilling employees' competences in order to make it smoother for employees to collaborate with employers in an advanced digitalised work environment. Additionally, attention is given to employers and employees' increased interaction in the planning and use of new technologies and skills. The well-being of employees during remote work has also received lots of attention among scholars, as well as the role of management during (and after) Covid-19 (SAK, 2021).

Social partners working on the collective agreements in the Financial sector have discussed frequently about the significance of tele- or hybrid work. For example, YTN has a collective agreement working group, specialised in the telework topic and changes related with remote work should be covered in the collective agreement. YTN takes also part in the FinanssiTYÖ2030-project. It focuses on employees' telework experiences and organises training for (tele)workers and for the representatives of employees, sometime also in collaboration with external organisations, such as EU-OSHA. (Reinikainen, 2023).

2.2 General national evidence

2.2.1 Working time and work-life balance

Already before the COVID-19, scholars stressed a need to pay more attention to how telework is managed and organised, in particular in cases where the work is mainly done remotely (Salli 2012). Nätti and Anttila (2015) have also emphasised the role of **working time flexibility** ("joustotyöaika") where the teleworkers have the freedom to divide their working and leisure time. This kind of "working from everywhere" can blur the boundaries between working time and leisure time in particular for those workers who chiefly work from home (Kuisma and Sauri 2021). Reduced physical contact and social interaction, such as support and guidance with working tasks can also weaken the employees' work efficiency and motivation (Työterveyslaitos 2022). Saving time from not commuting

between office and home has been emphasised as a positive outcome of COVID-19 restrictions among employees (Kuisma and Sauri 2021).

2.2.2 Occupational safety and health

In addition to the previously mentioned topics, several national studies have focused on employees' **well-being** during the COVID-19 pandemic, in some cases also before and after it. For example, the *Finnish Institute of Occupational Health* has made an extensive study about employees' well-being during the COVID-19. The researchers sent a survey during four different time-periods: 1. summer 6/2021; 2. at the end of the year 12/2021, 3. summer 6/2022, 4. at the end of the year 12/2022) to employees aged 18-65 years. The summary focused on answers of those employees who replied in all four surveys (N = 480).

The data³ showed the following core topics: Between summer 2021 until the end of the year 2022 the differences between well-being at work increased between employees from different educational backgrounds: **work engagement declined** 2,7 % among employees and most among employees with middle-level education (5%). The **ability to work** declined 3,5% among all employees, also here the biggest percentage was among employees with middle-level education (5,0%), followed by lowest level of education (3,7%), whereas there were no remarkable changes among employees with highest level of education. Additionally, **burnout increased** with 2.3% among employees, but in this category the biggest percentage was among the ones with lowest level of education (4,2%). Burnout was also reflected in an increase of negative attitudes towards work (4,1%) and as an increase of cognitive weaknesses (4,3%), such as memory, accuracy and concentration among all employees. During 2022, the risk for burnout increased somewhat more, i.e., more than every fourth (27,2%) of 560 respondents felt either an increased risk (18,5%) or a risk for burnout (9,5%)(Kaltiainen and Hakanen, 2023).

In the same study, the declining well-being of **young employees** was highlighted for several reasons: The younger the employee, the greater the symptoms of burnout. Young people experienced more symptoms of burnout and work engagement. A risk for burnout has increased among primary and secondary school graduates: 34.6% of them have an increased risk of burnout or probable burnout, compared to 19.7% of university graduates. (Kaltiainen and Hakanen, 2023).

On the basis of administrative statistics from the *Social Insurance Institution of Finland* (Kela), the **number of sickness allowances** has decreased among employees, except among those who had experienced mental disorders in year 2020. However, the number of recipients remained at the previous year's level, i.e., since 2016 until 2020 there had been an increase of mental health disorders (Blomgren 2021). The latter have been also the main reasons behind the transition to **disability pension**. Mental health disorders were the only category that had increased among number of people taking disability pension in 2021. It should also be noted, that very few people took disability pensions in 2021 in comparison to the years before COVID-19 (Finnish Centre for Pension, 2022).

2.2.3 Evidence of equality and non-discrimination

Men and women experienced telework during the COVID-19 pandemic differently. For example, female respondents who took part in the Finassityö2030 (2021) study experienced it easier to combine home and work, whereas more than half of male respondents working the Finance sector felt that

³ The survey was sent during four different time-periods (1. summer 6/2021; 2. at the end of the year 12/2021, 3. summer 6/2022, 4. at the end of the year 12/2022) to employees aged 18-65 years. The summary focused on answers of those employees who replied in all four surveys (N = 480).

remote work makes it more difficult to separate work and free time. Instead, women experienced more negative changes than men in female-dominated sectors, such as in the education and the social and health sectors. Similarly, women working in the hotel and catering and cultural sectors were tired of constant uncertainty and restrictions. Instead, mothers of school-aged children who worked remotely had positive experiences (Sutela and Pärnanen, 2021).

2.3 Sectoral evidence (ICT consultancy, financial activities, chemical industries and public administration)

This analysis will focus on four sectors which face different constraints in relation to telework. We define them in terms of NACE 2-digit codes, namely:

- ICT consultancy and related activities (mostly covered by NACE 62)
- Financial activities (NACE 64)
- Chemical industries (NACE 20)
- Public administration (NACE 84)

There are only few studies done about the significance of telework in the chosen industrial sectors relevant for TWING done by Finnish researchers. The studies discussed in this chapter do not necessarily focus entirely on telework, but are closely connected to the topic because of the nature of the work done particularly in the ICT and finance sector.

2.3.1 ICT consultancy and related activities (mostly covered by NACE 62)

A Finnish research team at the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health analysed data collected for the MEADOW survey, an EU-funded project⁴ on **employers' perceptions of the extent of telework during the Covid-19 pandemic and their prospective telework**. The MEADOW survey comprised of a stratified random sample of companies and public organisations employing at least 10 people. A total of 1,478 respondents took part in the survey in late 2022. The respondents worked at the management level in organisations. Up to 75% of the respondents had teleworked on weekly basis. Telework has been most common in industrial sectors where the nature of work has made it possible, such as in central government, finance, real estate and software. In these sectors telework was supported by good equipment. The study showed how *trust* towards employees is strongest in organisations where the nature of work supports telework. For example, larger IT companies and software industries as well as the financial, insurance, and real estate industries are prepared to give decision-making power to their teams. Selander, Alasoini and Hakonen (2022) state that reasons for delegating decision-making power can also be connected with practicalities, such as the frequency and timing of meetings, as well as with the opportunity to follow co-workers' experiences of telework.

Another study explored the **use working time among ICT experts** in their work. Huusko and Sivunen (2022) interviewed 25 ICT-experts, and found diverse kinds of working time needs among the workers in the sector. The report gives a picture of information work, its operating environment and working requirements based on communication technology, which is independent of time and place. The interviewees consisted of representatives of employers and employees, representatives of labor market organizations, researchers and civil servants. According to the researchers, companies could have access to more flexible working time by taking better into consideration the fluctuation of production and service needs, as well as by increasing employees' opportunities to influence their own

⁴ Meadow is a European project gathering 14 research teams coordinated by the CEE (Centre d'Etudes de l'Emploi); MEADOW project is designed to set out Guidelines for collecting and interpreting harmonised data at the European level on organisational change and its economic and social impacts. (see also: <http://www.meadow-project.eu/>)

working hours. These proposals can be of importance in the elaboration of the work time legislation in Finland.

2.3.2 Financial activities (NACE 64)

The financial sector has received somewhat more attention by scholars in comparison to the other three sectors. Alasoini (2019) **compared EU regulations to the work of bank experts** in the Finnish setting. His empirical analysis, showed, on the one hand, how an increased standardization of work due to digitalization has not conflicted with the increased autonomy and problem-solving of bank employees in expert positions. On the other hand, the new requirements introduced by EU regulation, such as increasing documentation and the fragmentation of responsibilities, would already seem to have significantly reduced financial and wealth advisors' autonomy at work. Another current study, *The Finanssiö2030* project compiled information about new operating methods and workplace innovations introduced in the financial sector, especially during COVID-19, and how these best practices were distributed both within the sector and to related sectors.

Respondents representing big financial companies, consider remote and hybrid work as a very likely option also in the future. Instead, attitudes towards remote work are more reserved in smaller companies. Women in particular find it easier to reconcile work and family when they can work remotely. The study also showed that remote work has allowed employees to better focus on their tasks and save time on commuting. Problems arose especially from the lack of exchange of tacit knowledge, a weakened sense of community and, in customer work (e.g. sales, customer acquisition and customer advice). The latter was difficult to realise in remote working conditions. (Finanssiö2030, 2021).

Among the biggest recent changes in the financial sector is the possibility to use digitalization for the purpose of remote work. Still, the effect of digitalization differs from one financial job to another. The sector comprises diverse kinds of jobs and work processes, so the impact of digitalization is not clear-cut. Some of the employees work with routine work in form of customer service and claims handling, whereas other work more autonomously, such as the investment and financial experts, administrators and employees working with product development and management positions (Finance sector 2019). The impact of remote work and digitalisation became also as popular topics for Bachelor and Master thesis. Several of these focus on change management in organizations and change in skills needs (Asikainen, 2016; Haapakoski, 2021; Mäki & Lehtivuori, 2022; Merenlahti 2022; Sokka 2018).

2.3.3 Public administration (NACE 84)

Only few studies done on telework in **public sector** were found. In their article, Hasu et al. explored the everyday life of seven typist working for Kela (Social Insurance Institution). The study was done before COVID-19, at the 'moment before the automation of work' in year 2019. The analysis revealed that the participants produced four different types of authoring of their everyday life and work as digitalised home-workers: adjustor, concentrator, hobby enthusiast, and wage earner–entrepreneur. From the perspective of the micro-level analysis of everyday life, telework at home is not a place to escape to or a dream come true; it represents the multifaceted transformation of working life, with all its tensions.

2.3.4 Chemical industries (NACE 20)

Although, no explicit reports or studies about telework within **chemical industry** were found, there is a MA-thesis done about telework in a closely related industrial sector, namely the pharmaceutical

sector, the latter is not under the same CBE as chemical sector. In her MA-thesis, Korventausta (2022) studied **employees' experiences of remote work, its suitability and factors affecting the effectiveness of remote work in the pharmaceutical industry**. The data consisted of responses from a survey (response rate 34.9%) and interviews. Korventausta's results confirm previously found ones from telework, i.e. the respondents experienced the combination of work and free time as flexible; it was also easier for the respondents to focus on work. Communication worked well in telework, but face-to-face information exchange was considered as also important. Especially, the exchange of tacit knowledge is transferred more smoothly in face-to-face interaction. In addition, respondents found it important to plan and innovate face-to-face. Still, it can be concluded that telework suits well to research-innovation work and to product development. Based on the results, 40% of the respondents would prefer to continue working remotely, moreover telework is considered as an efficient way of working.

3. Regulation

3.1 Statutory legislation

3.1.1 Main laws regulating telework

There is no comprehensive legal regulation of telework in Finland, although there are relevant telework regulations done mainly through OHS regulations and different laws. There is no specific law covering telework, nor is the concept of telework recognised in the labour law. Still, it is possible to find a legal basis for telework in separate acts, regulated mainly by the Working Times Act and the Occupational Safety and Health Act. Additionally, it is important to take into consideration the information on principal terms of work explained in the *Employment Contracts Act (55/2001)*. The Working Time Act and the Occupational Safety and Health Act guide telework in the following way:

Working Time Act 872/2019,

- Section 2 – Derogations from the scope of application
- Section 13 – Flexiwork

Since 2019, the Working Time Act, is no longer connected to the physical premises of the employer, i.e., ‘working hours are considered the time spent on work regardless of the place’ (Sanz de Miguel 2020, p.5). ‘As a rule, the Working Times Act applies to remote work. By law, records must be kept of employees’ working hours. The employer has a legal obligation to supervise that safety and healthiness of employees’ working methods. The need to enforce limits on working hours is not suspended when the work is performed outside the employer’s site of work. The length of the work day is one of the key indicators to look at when preventing harmful stress and strain. On the other hand, the employee’s personal responsibility for work arrangements and adequate breaks is highlighted in remote work. Not all remote work arrangements are covered by the Working Times Act. Such situations referred to in section 2 of the Act must always be assessed as a whole and on a case-by-case basis’. (OHS, 2023).

Occupational Safety and Health Act (738/2002)

- Section 5 – Application of the Act to work done in the employee’s or other person’s home
- Section 8 – Employers’ general duty to exercise care
- Section 10 – Analysis and assessment of the risks at work

Another guiding act is the Occupational Safety and Health Act (738/2002, TTurVL). Its aim is to strengthen working conditions and the working environment in order to protect and maintain employees' ability to work, as well as to hinder and combat occupational diseases, work accidents, and other harms to the physical and mental health of employees resulting from work and the working environment (TTurVL § 1). The law is applied also to telework with certain restrictions, i.e. the employer is in charge of the occupational safety and health of the employee, as long as this is in line with the duties described in OHS Act Sections 9, 10 and 12 and Chapters 3 and 5. The employer is restricted by the protection of privacy protected in Article 10 of the Constitution (731/1999), ‘the employer cannot be imposed such operational obligations that it is neither legally nor factually possible for him to fulfill’ (Kurvinen, Korhonen and Vartiainen, 2022).

3.1.2 Key concepts and their definitions

The definition of telework, or often also called as remote work, is fairly similar between the key actors working with the topic. **The current working time legislation does not recognize the concept of telework or remote work**, as it is often called in the Finnish context. For example, in the Working Time Act (872/2019), there is no clear clarification what is meant by remote work. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration remote work is defined as:

[A] flexible form of employment that can be performed outside the actual place of work on a voluntary basis and according to agreed upon rules. Remote work is distinguished by the fact that it is independent of time and place. Employees can work all or a part of their hours remotely.

Remote work, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration

An example of remote work definition is provided by the chemical sector, where remote work refers to “irregular work”, i.e., regular work is mainly done in the premises of the employer. The definition beneath leaves open the meaning of “regular” work:

In this context, telecommuting refers to work arrangements agreed in the employment contract, i.e. to work that takes place outside the actual place of work. However, work that is regularly done outside of the agreed workplace is not defined as remote work. Hybrid work, in its turn, refers to a working model where work is done periodically remotely and physically at the workplace.

Collective agreement of chemical sector, (4.20 Annexe 12, Remote and hybrid work instructions)

3.1.3 Telework regime

3.1.3.1 Regulation of the telework regime

Until recently, there has not been any single legislation covering the telework arrangements, but employers try to take into consideration criteria mentioned in working time related legislation consisting of the Working Time Act 872/2019, Employment Contracts Act (55/2001) and of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (738/2002). Neither are there any formal directives nor legislation about workers’ right to request telework in Finland. **Telework practices are mainly agreed at company level between the employer and the employee.** These practices include usually the following: ‘how work results are monitored, sick leave policy, information security, possible costs and their distribution, monitoring of occupational stress and strain, contingency planning’. (The Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Remote work). An exception is a recent act about compensating government personnel for accidents caused by remote work governmental workers. This law specifies the circumstances and conditions permitting a worker to receive compensation.

The current Working Time Act (872/2019) has faced criticism from unions. In its statement about the functioning of this act, Akava (2022) proposes to the Ministry of Labor and the Economy, among other things, the addition of the definition of remote work to the Working Time Act: the rights and obligations related to remote work must be specified, amongst other things. The current law entered into force in 2016, during a time when telework was less common than today. The existing law does not take into account situations where the employer would order his employees to work remotely, as it happened during the pandemic time in the Spring 2020. In their statement, Akava (2022) also underlines, that the employer should not have the right to oblige the employee to work remotely. Among employer’s duties is to organize safe premises for office work, now and in the future.

The provisions of the Working Time Act must be applied to remote work, but Akava (2022) argues that a clarification of the law is needed to ensure a clearer legal situation. Akava emphasizes that the current legislation does not recognize the concept of remote work, and remote work has not been sufficiently taken into account in working time regulations. The employee's right to remote work is not regulated. Possible exceptions to the scope of application must be precisely defined and predictable, such as a clarification of which jobs fall under the scope of the Working Time Act and which do not. Attention should be paid especially to the working time autonomy. In its current form, only those employees who have working time autonomy can fall within the scope of the exception. Several unclaritys have remained in the act, such as with the clarification of working hours of specialists, officials and prosecutors, among others.

3.1.3.2 An Act compensating the governmental employees from accidents

A law compensating the governmental employees from accidents has recently come into force (Laki valtion henkilöstölle etätyöstä johtuvissa olosuhteissa sattuneiden tapaturmien korvaamisesta 1012/2022). Remote work was uncommon for governmental employees before the COVID-19. The law addresses how compensation for government employees who suffer accidents while conducting remote work should be managed. The law is important because of its context, but it covers only state personnel, and not for example the entire public sector, in other words, it cannot be generalized to the entire public sector (see Figure 1). The Finnish public sector comprises of two distinct parts: governmental and municipal institutions and their employees. In other words, municipal employees working with public services, such as employees working in municipal health- or daycare and schools are not included in the governmental part. Unions have criticized the current compensation act because it treats different types of public employees unequally, i.e., employees of the national government are better protected than municipality employees who do not have a specific law protecting them.

Another pertinent topic stressed by the unions, is the need for an accurate interpretation of work-related accidents in remote work, i.e., it is decisive what is counted as an activity directly related to work and what is not. Accurate written documentation of the course of the accident is very important (Akava 2023).

Act for governmental employees about compensating government personnel for accidents caused by remote work (1012/2022)

5§ State personnel's remote workplace and state personnel's remote work accident in the area of the remote workplace

The remote workplace of government personnel is a space other than that organized by the employer that is suitable for doing work, where the person is allowed to perform their official or work duties according to the employer's instructions.

A remote work accident for government personnel is a sudden and unexpected event caused by an external factor that causes an injury or illness to a person and that has occurred in the area of the remote work location in an activity normally related to work other than in connection with work

6§ Remote work accident of government personnel outside the remote workplace area

A telework accident of government personnel is also an accident that has happened to the employee outside the area of the remote workplace in an activity normally associated with the following conditions: 1) on the journey between the apartment or workplace and the remote workplace or on a journey that is necessary for working between remote workplaces; 2) in the vicinity of the remote workplace during the usual meal or recreation break and immediately on the related trip; 3) on a regular trip from an apartment or remote workplace to the care facility or back, made for arranging daycare for children, and a slight deviation from the shortest travel route due to a visit to a grocery store or another comparable reason.

14§ Notification of remote work accident

The person must notify the employer of the remote work accident as soon as the circumstances are taken into account taking is possible.

The employer must report a remote work accident to the State Treasury no later than ten business days after the employer received information about the accident. The State Treasury confirms the form of the notification.

However, the compensation case must be initiated no later than one year after the date of the damage.

Figure 1. An extract of the act about compensating government personnel for accidents caused by remote work

3.2 Collective regulation in the four sectors covered

Before we continue the analysis of collective agreements in the four chosen sectors for this study, a short description of the Finnish collective bargaining model is at place. The formalisation of industrial collective bargaining arrangements in Finland took place after the Second World War. Finland, as other Nordic countries, has a reputation of its strong collective bargaining coverage. A centralised incomes policy has been used as the basis for the Finnish collective bargaining model based on tripartite national income policy agreement (*tulopoliittinen kokonaisratkaisu*), which has dominated the labour market system in Finland since the 1960s. Recently, there have been signs of decentralization. Since 2015, the Finnish bargaining model has been moving from centralised towards industry-level bargaining, however, along procedures following rules defined in the CBA. The high level of centralisation of collective bargaining between 1968 and 2017 can be seen as one of the core reasons

for a strong collective bargaining coverage. It can also be explained by extension mechanisms reaching unions and employer's organisations and by high unionism rate. (Jonker-Hoffrén 2019).

The core union confederations at the central level are AKAVA (Confederation of Unions for Professional and Managerial Staff in Finland), the Finnish Confederation of Trade Unions (SAK, Suomen Ammattiliittojen Keskusliitto) and the Federation of Salaried Employees (STTK, Suomen Toimihenkilöiden keskusliitto) These confederations of unions have members across the different sectors, depending on the types of job in question.

The peak level cross-sectoral employer organisations consist of the Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK, Elinkeinoelämän keskusliitto), the Local Government Employers (KT, Kunnan työnantajat), the Office for the Government as Employer (VTML, Valtion työmarkkinalaitos) and the Church Employers (KIT, Kirkon työmarkkinalaitos). The chemical sector is important in the Confederation of Finnish Industries, mainly because the high rate of chemical sector products exported from Finland (Jonker-Hoffrén 2019).

The peak labour market organizations for employers and unions have, in the past, engaged in tripartite collective bargaining, providing framework agreements for sectoral bargaining, but no longer do so because of employer exit from these arrangements in 2017. They are, however, active in publishing policy recommendations, and are influential in government policy formulation.

Sectoral labour market organizations, however, continue to exercise influence both through labour market policy consultations by the government, which are often tri-partite, and directly, through collective agreements. The Finnish government and unions for ICT, finance and chemical sectors have included in their collective agreement written guidelines for agreements on telework. The most detailed descriptions have written by unions representing the ICT and Finance sectors, i.e., those two sectors with also the most extensive experience of telework. Beneath is a short description of these recommendations and about possible improvement suggestions.

3.2.1 Collective agreement of the Finance sector

The three unions, Service Sector Employers Palta, Trade Union Pro and Federation of Professional and Managerial Staff YTN representing the financial sector have written a recommendation for a remote work agreement in the *Collective Agreement for the Financial Sector 2022-2024*⁵. The recommendation is not binding and should be seen as a guideline for the employers and employees. It comprises clear guidelines about what to take into consideration in this specific agreement highlighting a jointly preparation between the employer and employee about the principles of remote work agreement. Similar recommendations have also been done by other unions, e.g. remote work guidelines or recommendations are also attached in the CBA:s for ICT and chemicals. The recommendation written for the financial sector CBA does **not explicitly define the term remote work**, but frames it as the following:

Work is no longer always as bound to time, place and presence as it used to be. In remote work, regular work under a collective agreement takes place outside the employer's premises. Remote work may be carried out as needed for a short or long term and occasionally or regularly.

Recommendation, Collective agreement for the financial sector 25 March 2022–29 February 2024

⁵ <https://ytn.fi/sopimus/collective-agreement-for-the-financial-sector-2022-2024/>

The **equal treatment of employees** is taken into consideration by stressing the optional nature of remote work and an equal possibility 'to everyone while considering the nature of work and the employee's position and their aptitude for remote work'. The recommendation includes also a section stressing the need to agree and have a **written agreement** about the duration of the agreement, obligations and rights, such possible subsidised costs. Furthermore, when discussing about the rights and obligations of the employee it is important to follow the existing employment contract. Additionally, it includes guidelines about the validity of the remote work agreement, e.g., *remote work agreements may be fixed-term agreements or valid until further notice*, and also about the significance of mutual agreement between parties about possible suspension of the remote work agreement. The unions stress also the following: *company's rules concerning remote work and other applicable labour legislation are adhered to when working remotely*.

In their recommendation, the he unions also recommend employers to apply the **Working Times Act** in the regulation of remote work:

The working week set out in the collective agreement is complied with when working remotely. The parties must agree on the daily and weekly regular working time and on the times when the employee is available to/can be contacted by the employer. Increments for evening, night or weekend work are paid for planned evening, night and weekend work that is based on a shift list. If the employee is free to decide when the employee carries out the work, no increments are paid for remote work. Any overtime work must be agreed with the employer. If the parties agree on other additional work during the validity period of the remote work agreement, its effects on working time and remuneration must also be agreed in connection with the same.

Recommendation, Collective agreement for the financial sector 25 March 2022–29 February 2024

Remote work equipment, such as software, furnishings and data communication connections should be purchased by the employer. Additionally, (s)he is also in charge of the maintenance and insurances of the equipment. Nevertheless, there is no mentioning how and if taxation of purchases should be taken into consideration.

The **occupational safety and well-being** are also stressed in the model. It highlights, the duty of the employer to offer remote workers with sufficient guidance into safety and security instructions, as well as with adequate working methods, whereas employees, in their turn are expected to comply with the occupational safety instructions provided by the employer. Attention is also given to psychological well-being of the employee, by stating:

Psychosocial stress factors mean factors related to work content and arrangements and the social functioning of a work community, which may cause detrimental stress to employees. A model for monitoring occupational well-being may be developed in cooperation with occupational health care services and the occupational health and safety personnel, with the special features of remote work taken into account.

The previous goes also in hand with monitoring of working time. It is recommended, that the employer reserves sufficiently time for **monitoring of working time**, support of employees and for the supervision, also of team work. Statutory accident insurances cover also the workers even if they would work remotely. However, the extent of the coverage of the statutory accident insurance concerning remote work is not clarified, only stated as it *must be reviewed in cooperation*. In other words, more attention should be given to the coverage of the statutory accident insurance and how it can be applied to remote work.

There is no mentioning about how **control and surveillance** are organized, such as provisions related implementation of digital monitoring systems and the rights of employees and their representatives regarding these systems. These issues should be seriously discussed by the working group in charge of the development of remote work agreement model.

3.2.2 Collective agreement of ICT-sector

The Association of IT sector Employees has established a working group focusing on current changes in working life caused by COVID-19 and digitalisation. The working groups has drafted recommendations for telework together with Technology Industry Employers of Finland and the Federation of Professional Managerial Staff – YTN. These recommendations are attached as an informal part of the formal CBA⁶. The aim with these guidelines is to clarify the use of telework in way satisfying all parties as well as by creating a safe framework for agreeing on telework, or telecommuting, as the representatives express it. In the recommendation, telework is called as **'telecommuting'** referring to the following:

In this context, telecommuting refers to working outside the actual workplace agreed in the employment contract. For instance, telecommuting can take place at an employee's home, during work or training-relate travel, and in other locations as agreed mutually.

Telecommuting shall be undertaken within the framework provided by the applicable legislation, collective agreement and the enterprise's own policies. The workload and objectives of a telecommuting employee shall be the same as for those employees carrying out similar tasks on the employer's premises.

Collective Agreement of the IT service sector 2022 – 2023, Appendix 8.

The unions also underline the importance of making a **written agreement** between the employer and employee about telework. This agreement should comprise details about the length of the telework (e.g., temporary or valid until further notice); clear grounds for possible suspension of the telework agreement, notice period relating to it, as well as a mentioning about the employee's return to his/her regular premises of the employer, unless otherwise agreed.

In the making of a teleworker agreement between the employer and employee(s), an open discussion about telework principles is underlined. There is also advice for the employer to discuss about **communication practices, working time arrangements** and **working methods**, but lacks any specific information particularly about what the latter two topics would comprise, at the same leaving the sentence open for possible misunderstandings. Instead, the recommendation includes clear suggestions for the improvement of teleworkers' well-being and equal treatment. The **well-being** of the teleworker can be strengthened by an appropriate exchange of information and by regular meetings. The latter helps to avoid teleworkers becoming isolated from the working community.

The importance of equal treatment of teleworkers is highlighted in the recommendation. For example, the control and surveillance are recommended to be maintained as close as possible to the regular office work monitoring: *'As a rule, working time monitoring should be arranged in a way that*

⁶ <https://ytn.fi/sopimus/collective-agreement-of-the-it-service-sector/>

the monitoring system used by telecommuting employees is the same as that used by the enterprise's other employees, with an aim to ensure equal treatment of all employees, no matter if they conduct their work in form of telework or regular office work' (italics added by the author). A further recommendation is to investigate, if telework related benefits, such as tools purchased for telework, are taxed or not. Additionally, an effort to emphasise equal treatment of the tele- and non-teleworkers is to cover the teleworker with an insurance coverage to the extent it is possible. The recommendation includes also a sentence relating with the occupational health and safety, namely: *It is recommended that the special occupational health and safety hazards and working conditions in telecommuting be taken into consideration in the occupational health care action plan.* The latter sentence leaves room for interpretation of what is meant by the *special* occupational health and safety hazards and working conditions. Further discussion of the topic is needed.

4. Conclusions

4.1 Incidence and main working conditions of virtual workers in the country and in the four sectors

Telework has had both positive and negative consequences on employers and employees. Employees' opportunity to save time and work more flexibly is a positive consequence. The time that is normally spent for commuting between home and work can be spent working. Employees also find it easier to combine work and home tasks or leisure time. Nevertheless, drawing a line between working and private time is more difficult among high-skill knowledge-based workers than among low-skilled workers. Despite the fact that the allocation of decision-making power to team leaders and middle-level management has worked smoothly mainly because of existing trust between management and employers (Kovalainen, Poutanen and Arvonen, 2022) there is a need to resolve management and supervision issues when implementing remote work arrangements. Lack of face-to-face interaction and social relations can weaken the trust between the employer and employees, or between employees. Furthermore, exchange of information and tacit knowledge becomes difficult, particularly among new employees in a company.

Other alarming signs include an increased number of people experiencing mental disorders in form of depression, insomnia and stress. Employees' well-being has weakened, particularly among young workers and students who are not used to work or study by themselves without physical face-to-face interaction. Both Finnish and international studies stress a need to pay more attention to the well-being of workers, as well as to how to maintain the social interaction between workers and management. At the management level, more attention could be given to how working tasks are managed and shared. By making a commitment to involve remote employees in the planning of work processes, such as in the production chain or project coordination, could strengthen employees' working motivation. Additionally, telework requires good organisational skills from the employees, therefore companies should pay attention to training of digital skills and time management of their employees.

4.2 The regulatory approach to telework in the Finnish context

Finnish telework legislation is not yet comprehensive. Instead, various topics such as working hours, and working time more generally have been regulated extensively in the *Working Time Act (1872/2019)*. Other important laws relevant to telework include the Employment Contracts Act (55/2001) and the Occupational Safety and Health Act (738/2002). Partly because of a lack of a distinct

telework legislation, there are no distinct telework regulations included in the collective agreements in these four sectors. Rather, the labour market organizations from various industrial sectors have drafted recommendations about telework agreements for employers and employees. These recommendations are included in the CBA:s as informal guidelines. Particularly, recommendations written by ICT and Finance sector representative are thorough and fairly explicit. Still, further discussion is needed about the definition of remote work, i.e., what does this comprise and, furthermore, how are possible remote work accidents covered by occupational and safety insurances?

4.3 Social partners' approach to telework in the four sectors considered

Social partners stress that the change from office work to telework has not caused significant problems in the four sectors discussed in this report. The biggest change has taken place in the public sector where telework had been more or less absent before the COVID-19. In the future, and hybrid work will most likely replace office work. In the chemical sector there is a clear line between work that can be done remotely or in the laboratory. In other words, telework is not an option for laboratory work. However, depending on the working tasks, occasional or even weekly based telework arrangements can take place among laboratory workers. This is something that was uncommon before the COVID-19.

Another topic requiring further investigation, is if there is a need for a legal right for workers to disconnect from telework. Currently this right does not exist in Finland, because telework agreements are done mainly on voluntary bases between the employer and employee. The voluntary nature is also reflected in the control and monitoring of the teleworkers' work. So far this topic has not been discussed by the social partners or the working groups in charges of CBA:s.

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5.1 Additional information

Answers for an e-mail questionnaire received from:

Taru Reinikainen, representative for collective labour agreement in the Chemistry Sector and the Private Laboratory Industry. Trade Union PRO, 20.03.2023.

Sirpa Reinikainen, representative for collective labour agreements in the Financial Sector. Federation of the Professional and Managerial Staff – YTN, 16.02.2023.

5.2 Collective agreements

Collective agreement for Chemistry (17.01.2022 -31.12.2023):

<https://proliitto.fi/sites/default/files/2022-08/Kemianalan%20toimihenkil%C3%B6sopimus%2017.1.2022-31.12.2023.pdf>

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