

Teleworking from home may seem easier, but it could disrupt your work-life balance – UN reports

15 February 2017 – Using smartphones, laptops and other technology to work from home can be a blessing – it does away with rush hour traffic, for example – but it also diminishes personal space and contact with colleagues, according to a new study released today by the United Nations labour agency and a private sector partner, which recommends how to address these work-life disparities.

This report shows that the use of modern communication technologies facilitates a better overall work-life balance, said the Jon Messenger, co-author of the joint report by the UN International Labour Organization (ILO) and Eurofund.

The study, *Working anytime, anywhere: The effects on the world of work* is based on interviews with workers and experts in 10 European Union member states, Argentina, Brazil, India, Japan and the United States.

It highlights positive effects of teleworking, such as greater autonomy on working time and better work-day organization, and reduced commuting time resulting in a better overall work-life balance and higher productivity.

On the down side, teleworking blurs the boundaries between work and personal life, depending on the place of work and the characteristics of different occupations, Mr. Messenger said.

People teleworking have a tendency to work longer hours, and have higher levels of stress as a result of overlapping paid work and personal life.

As telework becomes more prominent so too has the need to disconnect in order to separate paid work and personal life, with France and Germany beginning to look at arrangements at the company level, and at existing and new legislation, such as the ‘right to be disconnected’ (*le droit à la déconnexion*) in the most recent revision of the French Labour Code.

According to the report, there are distinctions between home-based teleworkers who seem to enjoy better work-life balance and ‘high-mobile’ workers who are more at risk of negative health and well-being outcomes.

The report recommends promoting formal part-time teleworking so that people working from home can maintain their ties with co-workers and improve their well-being.