

REWORK

Can REmote WOrking make labor maRKet more inclusive?

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the adoption of digital and remote work practices, leading to significant changes in societal attitudes towards this type of work. This shift has granted employees greater control over their working hours and the freedom to choose their place of residence. Moreover, it has provided employers with opportunities to tap into previously inactive or marginalized segments of the labor market, as these individuals value the flexibility of remote work and the reduction in commuting requirements. Given the aging population and labor shortages in European markets, remote work has the potential to activate the workforce, reduce social inequalities, and support local labor market development.

The REWORK project aims to evaluate the influence of remote work on the activation of women, a key demographic for the labor market, and the spatial mobility of young families. Additionally, the project aims to examine the potential implications for regional economic growth. The main objective is to assess the prospect of remote working to spur convergence in regional and local labor markets and to increase the activity rate among women. To achieve this, the project will collect new survey data to address the following inquiries: does the implementation of remote work solutions, in the post-pandemic era, encourage individuals aged 25-49 to relocate from urban areas to peripheral regions, and motivate women with children under the age of six to increase their professional activity? Specifically, the project will investigate the extent to which remote work can mitigate geographic disparities in labor markets and enhance women's participation in the workforce. The geographical focus of the project is the European Union, with particular emphasis on Ireland, Italy, France, Lithuania, and Poland. These countries were selected based on their experiences from 2019-2022 in promoting work-from-home opportunities for mothers with young children, as well as observations of regional migration patterns.

The main hypothesis of the project posits that remote work can significantly impact both the migration of individuals from metropolitan areas to peripheral regions and the labor force participation rate of women. However, the extent of this effect depends on the level of state involvement in promoting remote work as a standard form of employment. The newly acquired primary data will contribute novel insights that can inform labor market policies and regional development strategies in the countries under analysis.

Promoting women's professional engagement is a priority and key objective of the EU's economic policy. Increased female labor force participation fosters diversity and empowers women to support themselves, their families, and their communities, thereby improving living standards and reducing reliance on welfare systems. Furthermore, the technological and social changes associated with remote work can serve as drivers of regional development and mitigate the negative consequences of urbanization. Therefore, gaining a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underlying women's inclusion into the labor market and the role of remote work in local labor market development will shed light on the broader societal benefits of the digital revolution.