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Telework: Social progress or panacea?



The institution's Staff Committee ran a poll which returned some impressive results: a massive response rate (730 people) and an equally large desire to be able to work from home (86%).

Underlying Issues

The survey revealed related problems, such as **the length of time spent commuting to and from work**: an average of two and a half hours per day. Transportation, as well as the house price problem, are structural questions, or indeed political ones, that the country faces, which affect a large number of employees and independent workers. Addressing these issues means tackling powerful interests and deeply rooted customs. **EPSU CJ** has been working on the transport issue (see [here](#)). As for the institution, when will it tackle these issues, beyond producing its albeit interesting EMAS reports?

These are major problems, each of which needs to be understood. On the other hand, invoking the duration of the daily commute to support the case for working-from-home risks running up against Article 20 of the Staff Regulations.

Does this enthusiasm for-working-from-home not imply a desire to flee an anxiety-filled and unwelcoming workplace? Doesn't lost sense of community (as evidenced in recent elections) and rampant individualism lead to a case of "every man for himself" or, furthermore, "every man [at home] by himself"?

The type of survey used

A customer survey type methodology was used, which failed to address any disturbing aspects, such as: what consequences would massive teleworking have on the status of public servants and what type of employment would be reserved for future generations?

How many permanent and non-permanent employees have expressed an interest in working-from-home? Would the latter feel sufficiently confident in order to do their jobs out of sight of their managers?

EPSU CJ's positions

Working-from-home should not be a means of saving on office space, especially by promoting *open space*, as this will only strengthen the desire to flee. We must always ensure a strong and welcoming bond between workers and their place of work. The breakdown of this link dilutes the statutory link and favours calls for greater outsourcing.

Working-from-home should be possible in principle in all cases where it *"is compatible with the proper functioning of the service"*. Its availability should be determined according to uniform and non-discriminatory criteria. Flexible and decentralised implementation may lead to differing interpretations of the boundaries between working from home and sick leave, special leave or annual leave.

Arbitrary implementation would only feed the unhealthy climate that is endemic in the institution and dilute workplace solidarity, as already noted.

Regardless, the institution must retain control over working-from-home in order to defend it against the budgetary authority and even the EU legislator. And working-from-home should serve the purpose for which it was conceived (better work-life balance) and not be exploited as a panacea for other problems that mustn't be avoided.