



# Telework – Is it for me?

*Summary of results based on a study commissioned by the Employment and Training Corporation on the benefits and implementation of telework options in Malta, together with best practice examples in the area of teleworking.*



## What is Telework?

Telework is a method of organising and/or performing work in which a considerable proportion of an employee's working time is spent away from the firm's premises or from where the output is delivered; and when work is done using information technology for data transmission, in particular the internet.

## Is Telework present in many Maltese companies?

Not really!

The Employment Barometer carried out by ETC every 6 months asked 2 questions on telework to employers between Winter 2004 and Spring 2005.

Out of 1,118 employers who replied, only 43 said that they have some form of telework in their companies. This makes up 3.8% of the respondents.



## What are the benefits Telework can offer?

### To Employers...

If you are an employer, telework can...

- Save costs on office space and related expenses
- Increase service hours
- Increase staff productivity
- Reduce staff absenteeism and mistakes in work
- Enhance recruitment and retention of workers
- Help you retain professional and experienced employees who would have to leave work due to family commitments

### To Employees...

If you are an employee, telework can...

- Save you time and money in travelling costs – it is estimated that 2 trips of 30 minutes each, per day to travel to and from work, will amount to 234 hours of travel time per year!
- Reduce your stress level by improving your work-life balance
- Give you the flexibility of working from home
- Help you multi-task with other important areas of your life, such as family responsibilities and other life interests
- Lead to higher disposable income by saving on costs (petrol, car maintenance, etc.)
- Enhance your career through learning new skills and competences

## Are there any other added benefits?

- Teleworking can help alleviate the environmental issue as it reduces emissions from cars commuting to work everyday
- Telework creates new ways of working and can help integrate disadvantaged groups such as disabled persons into the workforce

## What does the study recommend as the next step?

### For employers...

- Introduce telework as a pilot project to assess its implementation
- Create a core team of management and end users to monitor and implement the project
- Implementing and monitoring of policies safeguarding and regulating Telework conditions
- A trust relationship and good communication between management and teleworking staff must be present prior to staff availing themselves of the telework option
- Telework involves a paradigm shift – a shift from a culture of presenteeism to a culture of trust where the quality of the work produced is the focus of work appraisal, rather than the presence of the worker at the place of work
- Support employees through the provision of equipment, software, technical support, health and safety inspections of home-work environment

### For employees...

- Allocate a separate space within the home, reserved for work-related tasks
- Take measures to reduce the risk of health hazards in this area, such as fires and faulty electrical connections

### For other stakeholders...

#### Government

- Promote and facilitate the implementation of teleworking within the Public Service
- A task force or commission may be created to implement and promote telework on a national scale

#### Unions

- Recognise the benefits of teleworking and stress these benefits to employers and workers in their collective agreements. They also must cooperate with both employers and employees to adopt best practice and prevent abuse of the system through an educational campaign or other means



# Are there good examples of how Telework is put into practice?

## **Ireland: eWork in Aer Rianta (Dublin Airport Authority plc)**

A pilot telework program was introduced in the late 1990s where 8 employees, 7 female and 1 male were selected to work 3 days a week from the 'home' office, and 2 days a week at the 'traditional' office. Positive results were seen both from the workers themselves, as well as the management. Management found that this form of working arrangements increased productivity, tasks were finished in a shorter time and teleworking was not seen as problematic to the functioning of the company. What they felt was important was that a sense of trust was present between management and teleworkers through constant communication before and while workers were teleworking.

## **Britain: Word Association**

Word Association is a marketing, media relations and web design company employing 9 full time staff. The decision to introduce full-time home teleworking was taken by the founder and Managing Director of the company. This decision led to the realisation that developments in technology and the nature of the business meant there were significant business and employee benefits from shifting to the new work style. These factors included: the desire to reduce overheads; the services offered did not require a fixed office location and changes in technology which offered the functionality and capability to allow home working whilst retaining the same or improved image and service quality to clients.

## **Denmark: TDC – Communication Technology Company**

TDC is Denmark's leading telecom provider. TDC are among the forerunners of telework in Denmark having 7.000 teleworkers. This is the largest collective organisation example on telework in the country.

TDC started running different pilot projects, where some staff members were offered telework as a supplement to their workplace at the central office, while others were asked to work more or less 100% from home. During these pilot projects it became evident that the alternating solution was very beneficial to both the company and the individual using the service.

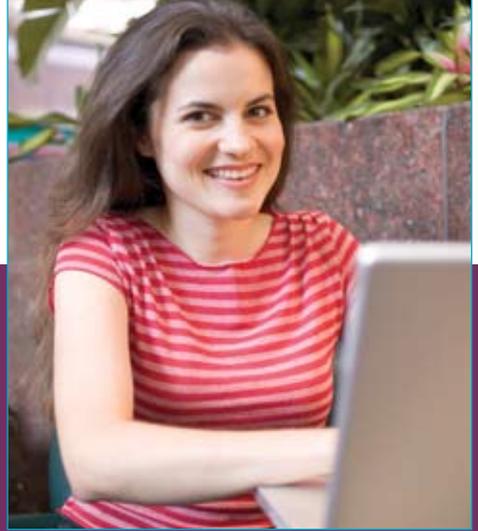
Today telework is not something considered as a special phenomenon, but is a part of the family friendly human resource policy of the company. All new employees are offered telework as an integrated part of their work contract.

The way TDC has implemented telework seems to be sustainable as the employees become more satisfied and more flexible. Absenteeism rates have gone down and TDC is of the opinion that employees are more productive, and thus the arrangement is sustainable also from the point of view of the company.

## Malta: Malta Information Technology and Training Services (MITTS) Ltd

MITTS Ltd has always been in the forefront of family friendly policies and work practices. In June 2001 the Company piloted a framework for the implementation of teleworking among its employees. The recommendation was that the Company adopts a hybrid approach to teleworking and employees worked three days from home and two days from the office. This was done in order to ensure that the employees will not make a complete separation from the office environment thus alienating them from their colleagues at the office.

Through the piloting and implementation of this program, MITTS Ltd has recognised that the creation of a flexible work environment is a tangible business solution that translates into a win-win situation for both employers



and employees. It is all about how and where work can be done most effectively, and how maximum benefit can be gained by both the employer and employee. This message comes across clearly as more employees struggle with busy and competing schedules. Teleworking may be instrumental in helping workers at MITTS to strike a better balance between work and family demands.

Teleworking has provided MITTS Ltd with the opportunity to retain trained working mothers with the necessary skills and knowledge, who previously would not have been able to work full time away from home. Employees working on a teleworking schedule have consistently reported reduced stress, improved job satisfaction, less commuting time, and all of them say that the opportunity to telework is quickly becoming a decisive influence on their decision to stay with the company, rather than take a job elsewhere.

MITTS Ltd currently has a number of employees, both men and women who are teleworking. They emphasise that trust and effective managerial practices are the basis of success when adopting telework.



## Some interesting snippets on Telework information in various countries

### Sweden

About 30% of all companies employing less than 50 persons make use of some form of telework. 87% of larger companies (having more than 500 employees) have telework as a working option.

### Germany

The State Government of the Hessen Region introduced a scheme offering financial support for SMEs that choose to implement a telework policy. Financial support is given for investment, work-place costs and consultancy and planning expenses related to this initiative.



### Belgium

The National Institute for Homeworking Training offers courses for employers and employees on different working arrangements. The course is given to both the employers as well as to employees wishing to telework. The course for employers deals with the planning, implementation and technological aspects of telework, while the course for employees focuses on their skills, rights and obligations while teleworking.

## Links and sources

Employment and Training Corporation (Malta):

[www.etc.gov.mt](http://www.etc.gov.mt)

Ministry for Investment, Industry and Information Technology (Malta):

[www.miti.gov.mt](http://www.miti.gov.mt)

Malta Information Technology and Training Services (MITTS) Ltd:

[www.mitts.gov.mt](http://www.mitts.gov.mt)

SUSTEL project:

[www.sustel.org](http://www.sustel.org)

Ework Irish Example:

[www.ework.ie](http://www.ework.ie)

European Commission Publication eWork, 2001:

[http://europa.eu.int/information\\_society/activities/atwork/\\_documents/ework2001.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/information_society/activities/atwork/_documents/ework2001.pdf)

European Commission Publication Collaboration@Work, 2005:

[http://europa.eu.int/information\\_society/activities/atwork/hot\\_news/publications/documents/collabwork2005.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/information_society/activities/atwork/hot_news/publications/documents/collabwork2005.pdf)

