SWIFT SME

**Smart Working: Innovative & Flexible Training for SME
2020-1-DE02-KA202-007601**

Mapping the Smart Working phenomenon

Intellectual Output 2

PART C: Results and evidences from the survey

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Introduction to the structure of the survey

Back in November 2020, in conjunction with the official launch of the project and the implementation of literature reviews analysis of reports and publications on the matter from external sources, partners kickstarted also the primary research (i.e. survey) as originally included in SWIFT's project proposal.

Its content and structure have been discussed by all partners. The consortium settled up a quantitative target of 50 responses gathers from stakeholders of interest for the implementation of the project, the validation and impacts of Intellectual Output 2 and the overall project. In total, we managed to collect 86 responses in total.

The survey has been developed in ENG and later translated by partners into their national languages so as to facilitate its dissemination among targets and recipients linked to their operational context. The scope of the survey was to gather additional information on the outcomes of smart working at organisation and SME's dimension that would have been instrumental to inform even further (and better) the relevancy, scale and focus of SWIFT's training materials.

All feedbacks and inputs from respondents and compliant with the EU Regulation on Data protection (GDPR EU 2016/679). Data have been used only for the purpose of the mapping activity. No organisational or personal data have been made publicly available nor have been transmitted to third parties.

Results from respondents

1. Please define the type of your organisation:

□ Microenterprise (up to 10 employees)	**44%**
□ Small/Medium enterprise (up to 250 employees)	**38%**
□ Large enterprise (> 250 employees)	**18%**

2. Has your organisation/company ever implemented smart/teleworking before COVID-19?

□ YES	**47%**
□ NO	**53%**

3. Are <u>you</u> more motivated in your work after the transition to smart working?

□ YES	**45%**
□ NO	**18%**
□ I do not know	**37%**

4. Is <u>your team/organisation</u> more efficient and motivated after the transition to smart working?

□ YES	**33%**
□ NO	**30%**
□ I do not know	**37%**

5. Do you think that by working remotely you are able to perform your tasks more efficiently and effectively?

□ YES	**52%**
□ NO	**26%**
□ Neutral	**22%**

5a. You can elaborate in a short paragraph your answer to the previous question (optional)
Few testimonials from our respondents:

- *I can plan better the tasks against the several and new difficulties that Covid-19 supposed in the daily routine of each person or family. It allows me to carry out my job in specific moments without the stress that I would feel in above circumstances, which I would have to change many things, I would have to depend on other people or I would have even to sacrifice my vacation days. Now, with smart working, it is not necessary, because the working time is suits to me, not vice versa, like before.*
- *Generally, we got more work in exchange of sacrificing more hours. There isn't digital disconnection, so we are more effectives (I don't know if we are also efficient), but our working hours are more than what we developed in the office. Smart working is really more comfortable, but, in case of my department, we don't know how "stopping" and how we can do "normal" working hours.*
- *In the kind of jobs which you have to work at costumer's home, it is not a fundamental element. It is very important establishing the mechanisms of differentiation of working hours.*
- *The personal working hour is more effective in his own home, but, sure, for other tasks it is necessary to have a reunion with the others members of the team.*
- *Actually, productivity and effectiveness are the same, in our company the working method doesn't affect our results.*
- *Fewer distractions. I manage my working space as I like and as it is more comfortable for me.*
- *There are a lot of tasks that I can better develop from home and there are others that it is better do in the office.*
- *I can carry out the tasks with the same efficiency than in the office, no more, no less.*
- *I don't know if my work through smart working is more effective than before, but I work well from home.*
- *It avoids distractions related to the office noises.*
- *Smart working allows me to better organise my daily routine.*
- *Working remotely allows our team to be more focused on results.*
- *No, for one simple reason: working remotely full time makes you actually work more which is not always a good thing. In other words, the working life can easily overlap the personal life.*
- *At the beginning there was high confusion, with time things "normalized", but now people are fatigued by teleworking.*
- *I can do better use of my time if I don't travel to work and I'm not bound to specific working time.*
- *Individual efficiency has probably increased but not at a team level (due to increased miscommunication).*
- *No, for one simple reason: working remotely full time makes you actually more which is not always a good thing. In other words the working life can easily overlap the personal life.*
- *I find easier to concentrate on work in the quiet & comfortable environment of my own place, rather than in the crowded, noisy office on site. I get less interruptions.*

- *I don't have the same facilities at home to carry out my work properly.*
- *Working at home, in a very small apartment, while the other members of the family also work from home (online school and so on), generates some difficulties...*
- *There are some things that only a face-to-face communication can effectively deal with. When you are researching and preparing reports, then often these may be done by remote means. When it comes to doing training, face to face communication is very different to using an online environment to present information. The physical presence gives something different. Quite often when at home people may be distracted, especially if other family members are around. Remote working can be helpful but is not the full solution. For some professions and trades it is simply not possible. You cannot manufacture a car from home.*
- *Smart working allows me to better organise my daily routine.*
- *Increased ability to concentrate, tranquillity, time gained.*
- *Remote work can be more productive by organizing the workday more comfortably.*
- *Time is better optimized and tasks better prioritized.*
- *Not every activity can be done effectively from home.*
- *I believe that productivity is at the same level...*
- *This situation has pluses and minuses. Plus: save switching time, manage to fulfil small responsibilities around the house, avoid possible stressors such as noisy colleagues and other conflicts since "at the office" is a common space. As minus: everything is digital, meetings, calls; employees no longer spend time getting to know each other as individuals, which is very easy to achieve in a coffee break, eating together.*
- *I manage to work well, I'm no longer distracted by other colleagues, I no longer feel the pressure of the bosses, I manage my time better but that's because I do my job without asking for the help and support of direct bosses, I do not think it works for an employee without seniority and without experience.*
- *I no longer work like a robot in an office without moving...*
- *I feel really good about working from home, I'm less stressed about transportation to work, I have more peace and I focus more at home.*
- *Communicating with colleagues takes more time.*
- *Lack of stress in the presence of superiors, coordinators, etc. is a great plus for me.*
- *Interaction and teamwork are much more efficient.*

6. Do you feel that you were ready and prepared to work from remote?
Please, rank your readiness to smart working on a scale from 1 (absolutely not) to 10 (fully ready)

1	**1%**
2	**0%**
3	**5%**
4	**4%**
5	**12%**
6	**5%**
7	**11%**
8	**19%**
9	**24%**
10	**19%**

7. Which issues did you face in the transition from working from office to smart work? (more answers possible, up to three)

□ Managerial: i.e. delays and/or difficulties in communication overload of tasks, etc.	**34%**
□ Technological: i.e. ICT related issues, unavailability of software, etc.	**28%**
□ Operational: i.e. availability or need of specific equipment such as printers, scanners, etc.	**46%**
□ Logistic: i.e. access to suitable premises, etc.	**31%**
□ Communication: i.e. lack of personal and social relations with colleagues, etc.	**20%**
□ Personal: i.e. stress and anxiety for the health of the loved ones, etc.	**31%**

8. Has your organisation implemented specific policies and/or guidelines and/or tools to ease the transition to smart working after the pandemic?

□ YES	**57%**
□ NO	**44%**

9. How would you rate the readiness of your organisation/company in the transition to smart working?
Please, select your answer on a scale from 1 (totally inadequate) to 10 (excellent)

1	**0%**
2	**4%**
3	**8%**
4	**13%**
5	**8%**
6	**7%**
7	**10%**
8	**22%**
9	**16%**
10	**12%**

9a. You can elaborate in a short paragraph your answer to the previous question
Few testimonials from our respondents:

- *The company gave us a laptop that we can use for smart working, besides they are very present on the chat and they call us for any doubts. In the morning we usually talk with the team, so we are aware of everything and we can talk a little bit with the colleagues.*
- *My company gave the possibility to request smart working days based on several threat variables. It established fixed days, but, sometimes, smart working it isn't necessary in a specific day of the week.*
- *When it all started, the only thing I had to do was take my laptop and starting to work from home. There wasn't a "transition", because the smart working and the flexible working hours have already been implemented.*
- *The company gave us the equipment from IKEA. They increased the meeting online to keep in touch with the colleagues.*
- *We've adapted quite well by passing from working at the office to working from home, the work didn't suffer, neither the customers.*
- *We already had a structure for smart working. The oaky were the customers that weren't ready and the pandemic limitations.*
- *My company was ready enough, in two days the workers started to work from home (before of official lockdown).*
- *Laptop availability and needed infrastructure that ensure the communication and the smart working.*
- *I don't believe that smart working can affect efficiency and productivity if there is no cultural change of the entire organization involved. On the contrary, I believe that without a change in the way of working during smart working, anxieties, meetings, useless phone calls and the mania for control increase exponentially.*
- *Our organisation was ready for teleworking as it had systems in place (I.e. software, systems and communication channels). Less ready from a cybersecurity point of view.*
- *No system in place whatsoever.*
- *The company made available software and solutions. Teamwork had to adjust to new ways of working and collaboration*
- *Some of the personnel was already working remotely (sales team). The company was very quick and efficient in organising remote working for the other employees.*
- *From the point of view of the technology, they were quite ready, but mentally they were not (there was this idea of staff only working hard if they are gathered in the office).*
- *There are some technical limitations (e.g. access to specific equipment that cannot be moved home and needs human presence.)*
- *Various online tools explored to see what can make team work still effective. But, it's still not the same as being in the office and going over to speak to someone about an issue*
- *The company wasn't ready for smart working, but it adapted along the way.*
- *In my case the biggest minus is the fact that I do not have the necessary equipment mentioned in the contract, which ensures optimal working conditions: suitable office, chair, etc. Also, I do not receive any compensation for the fact that I use my resources 100% to continue working: internet, electricity, water, etc.*
- *Pandemic caught them by chance semi-prepared for telework advance in view of the nature of work (use of soft frequency, internet ...) The reticence still exists.*
- *Since it went from day to day to long-distance work, the adaptation had to be instant.*

10. Do you think that smart working improved your work-life balance?

□ YES	**52%**
□ NO	**23%**
□ Neutral	**26%**

11. Considering your experience with smart working, in the future will you still consider telecommuting?

□ Yes, absolutely   **44%**
□ No, not at all   **10%**
□ Yes, but in a hybrid formula (i.e. two days/week from office, two days/week from home)   **46%**

12. Out of the following topics for a possible training and/or tool, please select <u>three</u> that you believe are most relevant to empower SMEs through the transition to smart work

□ Digital and online communication   **38%**
□ Work-life balance   **48%**
□ Self-wellbeing   **31%**
□ How to boost your team productivity from home   **38%**
□ Remote project management   **32%**
□ Agile Management by Objectives   **20%**
□ Teleworking: a selection of digital tools to manage your business   **34%**

12a. You can recommend in a short paragraph any other training topic that might be relevant to empower SMEs through the transition to smart work

Few inputs from our respondents:

- *Workplace configuration and basic routines to separate working time and personal time. Double presence, conciliation factors of personal and working life.*
- *Maintenance of equipment, smart working tools*
- *Managing working time.*
- *Cybersecurity.*
- *I believe that organizations must be supported by a consultant who has already worked in smart working and who suggests all the useful ways for a cultural and relational change.*
- *Daily Huddles*
- *Ways to improve your work environment (i.e. sound internet connection solutions for people living in remote areas, childcare solutions for people with care responsibilities etc).*
- *Remote marketing activities, selling and presenting products on videocall rather that in presence.*
- *Online negotiation and conflict resolution.*
- *Non-formal hangout times, internal gamified processes to boost motivation.*
- *Meditation, nutrition, sports.*
- *Fair delegation of tasks.*
- *How to separate your personal and professional life.*
- *De-bureaucratization of companies.*

13. Do you think that a training on smart work that is made "ad hoc" for SMEs and their internal staff can be useful and relevant?

□ Yes, it is necessary   **55%**
□ No, there is no need for it   **20%**
□ I do not know   **25%**

Conclusive comments

Evidences from the primary research confirms many of the hypothesis discussed by partners not only before the official launch of the research, but even during the draft and development of SWIFT's proposal for the review and consideration of the National Agency.

Results indicate also major consistencies with data and information gathered form secondary sources and reports consulted by partners in the context of national and cross-national literature reviews.

The vast majority of respondents shown great enthusiasm towards the phenomenon of smart working but at the same time, they recorded different kind of dysfunctionalities that the project aims to address throughout the following cycle of implementation. Thanks to their flexible structure, micro and small/medium enterprises should be much less resistant to new operative framework. However, the transition is hindered by few inefficiencies emerging from an organisational and 'team work' perspective.

The availability of technologies facilitate collaboration from remote does not seems to be a critical factor enabling a smooth and fast transition towards smart managerial models. A significant group of participants confirmed that the transition happened by "trials-and-errors" before findings new equilibriums: most of respondents claimed that their organisation where *somehow* equipped to face the transition, but they lacked of frameworks that were coherent to its sustainability in the medium/long run.

Interestingly, there is a clear gap on how respondents perceived their efficiency working from home, compared to how team and cooperation dynamics have been impacted by the same scenario. Although respondents claimed to be much more effective in their work, this same benefit is not so prominent when we look at team's trends.

This is indicative of the fact that, despite of the large availability of IT tools, smart working implies firstly and foremost a detailed reorganisation of leadership paradigms and people management styles – as pointed out also by many respondents. This might help organisation and managers/employers in redefining definition of tasks and processes as well, consistently the new emerging working scenario.

To our view, the lack of 'human touch' that smart working comes with, explain why the majority of respondents prefer a hybrid formula to working exclusively from home, and from home only. This could help workers in mitigating the negative outcomes of smart working, mainly represented by managerial and operational that are difficult to deal with in remote working.

Participants were also overwhelmingly positive to the idea of "ad hoc" training material on smart working for SMEs. Out of the ones suggested by the SWIFT partnership, the most trending topic is definitely "work-life balance" and "well-being", followed by "online communication" and "HR from remote".

The SWIFT partnership will develop training curricula that reflect skill-gaps and needs analysis that stems from all of the above. The aforementioned resources will be available in multilanguage version on https://www.swiftsme.eu/training.php