

NEWSLETTER

ARESME

EDITION N°1 | APRIL 2025

Adapting national social partners' capacities to pursue inclusive and responsive social dialogue following crisis situations in EU



OUR PROJECT

ARESME is a 2 year international project, consisting of 6 partner organisations of which 5 are representatives of employers in micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and of self-employed in the craft and entrepreneurial (cross-industry) sector and one trade union organisation. Partners are holding status of a representative social partner.

The main goal of the project is to enhance social partner's performance and negotiation position in cross-industry and sectoral social dialogue following crisis situations in EU. The aim is to incorporate learned pandemic experiences for a responsive social dialogue.

ARESME unfolds two points – one is recommending updates of legal frameworks while protecting all parties included, and the other is empowering social partners to gain strength in bipartite and tripartite social dialogue.



TOPIC 01

Beginning of our project and its duration

TOPIC 02

Descriptions of ARESME objectives and outcomes

TOPIC 03

Developments in terms of occupational safety and health risks of new forms of work and how do we tackle them

DURATION

The ARESME Project has begun in August 2023 and the work concerning with its activities will be finished in July 2025.

Objectives of the Project

1. To stocktake the occurrence and status of various new forms of work in partners countries (platform work, telework, part-time work schemes) through risks that they bring in the field of labour law and occupational health and safety at work;
2. To recognize, raise awareness and tackle problems related with adequate minimum wages and gender income equality and preparation of recommendations to promote collective bargaining in general and on wage setting at national and EU level through a special contribution for the collective bargaining and implementation of collective agreements on national level;
3. To build, strengthen and improve the capacity of project partners and to promote a modernised social dialogue thru preparation of recommendations from the social partner organisations in bipartite and tripartite social dialogue at national level.

Expected overall Outcomes

1. Intensified and modernised social dialogue at cross-industry and sectoral level,
2. strengthened capacities of national social partners,
3. recommendations for social dialogue content in five European countries.

WORK IN PROGRESS

New Ways of Work and The Main Risks for Labour Conditions

This edition is specifically dedicated to the results obtained from the research and consultation with stakeholders, by each partner country, regarding their developments resulting from the pandemic crisis experienced between 2020 and 2022.

We know that the COVID-19 pandemic was a lever for organizing work across all spheres, enhancing a previously lesser-known reality, such as remote work and platform work.

ARESME investigate what is the state of the art two years past Pandemic Crisis, and this edition want to show some results concerning New Forms of work and its risks for labour conditions.



WHAT HAPPENED AND WHAT IS THE WAY FOR THE FUTURE ARE THE BIG QUESTIONS REMAINED.

While all countries have legislation for teleworking, Portugal and Spain have the most robust frameworks, particularly with respect to compensation for telework costs and enforcing the "Right to Disconnect." Malta and Slovenia focus more on health and safety regulations and ensuring equal treatment. Greece is catching up, with its recent legislation emphasizing the right to disformal agreements for telework.

Spain stands out as a leader in regulating platform work, with comprehensive laws that recognize platform workers as employees, offering them full benefits and protections. Portugal introduced the Presumption of Employment into its legislation prior to the adoption of the Digital Platforms Directive. Slovenia is aligning with EU directives, working toward stronger protections. Malta and Greece are struggling with informal labour markets and misclassification.

Part-time work plays an essential role in the labour markets of Malta, Spain, Portugal, Slovenia, and Greece. Malta and Spain have higher adoption rates, with women disproportionately engaging in part-time work due to caregiving responsibilities. Spain offers the most robust legal protections, especially regarding pensions. Slovenia and Portugal have lower participation rates but provide strong worker protections. Greece faces significant challenges with involuntary part-time work, income insecurity, and gender inequality.

Telework

- Telework falls under the Employment Relationships Act (ZDR-1), which mandates formal written agreements for teleworking.
- Telework rates rose during the pandemic, with 21% of men and 24% of women working from home at least occasionally by 2022.
- Employers are required to cover home office costs such as utilities and equipment for teleworkers.
- One major challenge is ensuring ergonomic conditions at home.

Platform Work

- Platform work is newer, and specific regulations are still in development.
- Most platform workers are self-employed.
- Lack social protections.
- Platform workers face poor working conditions, with minimal bargaining power and a lack of algorithmic transparency.

Part-time Work

- Part-time work accounts for 8.5% of the workforce, a decrease from a peak of 11.3% in 2017. Part-time employment is often seen as a temporary solution.
- The Employment Relationships Act (ZDR-1) ensures part-time workers have the same rights as full-time employees, including proportional pay and social benefits.
- While women are more likely to work part-time than men, Slovenia has a relatively balanced gender gap compared to other countries.



Slovenia



Malta

- Regulated under the Employment Act (2021) and the Telework National Standard Order (2008).
- Lacks comprehensive legislation on the Right to Disconnect.
- By 2023, around 30% of the workforce regularly teleworks, with sectors like ICT and financial services showing the highest adoption rates (over 60%).
- The government provides grants and tax credits to encourage businesses to adopt teleworking.

- The sector remains largely unregulated, with most workers classified as self-employed.
- Platform workers have minimal protections. Concerns around income stability and job security are widespread.
- No specific regulations exist around algorithmic management.
- Informal labour and lack of regulation contribute to job insecurity, income instability, and poor working conditions.

- Part-time work accounts for 15-16% of the workforce, with a significant gender divide: 26% of women work part-time compared to 6% of men.
- Part-time workers are well-protected under the Employment and Industrial Relations Act,
- A significant gender divide exists, with 26% of women working part-time compared to 6% of men.



Spain

- Law 10/2021 on remote work and Royal Decree-Law 28/2020 provide comprehensive regulation.
- Spain's Law 10/2021 guarantees the Right to Disconnect.
- Telework rates surged during the pandemic, reaching over 3.5 million workers, though it stabilized to about 3 million by 2024.
- Employers are mandated to compensate teleworkers for costs incurred due to remote work, and the government provides strong legal protections through its remote work laws.
- The primary concerns are data security, productivity management, and ensuring a balance between flexibility and oversight.

- The most advanced regulatory framework, Rider Law (Law 12/2021), ensures platform workers are classified as employees.
- Platform workers are entitled to full employment rights
- Workers are treated as employees, benefiting from social security, health care, unemployment benefits, and pensions.
- The Rider Law has significantly improved conditions in the delivery sector, though some sectors still face challenges with worker classification and law enforcement.

- Part-time employment represents 13.8% of the workforce. A notable gender disparity exists, with 73% of part-time workers being women.
- Article 12 of the Workers' Statute grants part-time workers equal rights as full-time workers.
- There is a pronounced gender disparity, with 73% of part-time workers being women.



Greece

- Teleworking is covered under Law 4808/2021, which formalizes telework and incorporates the "Right to Disconnect".
- The Right to Disconnect was introduced under Law 4808/2021.
- Teleworking adoption in Greece was much lower, at 7% in 2020.
- There is little mention of government financial support for teleworking.
- The challenges are more foundational, including **digital infrastructure**, lack of telework culture, and **digital divide** issues, particularly in **SMEs** and rural areas.

- Law 4808/2021 provides workers with collective bargaining rights and aims to address worker classification.
- Self-employment is a significant challenge, leaving many workers without full employment benefits.
- Provides some protections through Law 4808/2021.

- Only 6.5% of workers are employed part-time, with a significant proportion (65.4%) doing so involuntarily.
- Part-time work is regulated under Law 1892/1990 and Law 4808/2021.
- Women disproportionately make up the part-time workforce, often due to caregiving responsibilities or an inability to find full-time employment.



Portugal

- The teleworking regime is governed by Law No. 7/2009 and Law No. 83/2021.
- Law 83/2021 introduced the Right to Disconnect.
- Teleworking remained high post-pandemic, with 69% of teleworkers using a hybrid model.
- The legal framework obligates employers to compensate teleworkers for home office expenses.
- Issues like data protection, health and safety, and ensuring equitable access to teleworking resources are prevalent.
- The article 12-A of the CT added by Law no. 13/2023, of April 3 introduced the presumption of employment specific to digital platforms (before EU Directive).
- Workers are largely classified as self-employed.
- Is aligning with the EU directive that requires platforms to disclose how algorithms affect working conditions.
- Rapid growth in the gig economy has outpaced regulatory efforts, leading to issues with low wages and limited social protections.
- Only 6.8% of the workforce is employed part-time. This rate has declined in recent years, with part-time work.
- The Portuguese Labour Code guarantees proportional wages, social security, and access to benefits for part-time workers.
- Women and younger workers are more likely to work part-time.



Occupational safety and health risks of new forms of work

The Main Risks Identified based on the interviews conducted across Greece, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia, and Spain

Risks in Multiple Part-Time Jobs

- Vulnerable groups working multiple part-time jobs face compounded risks
- Part-time workers may also be vulnerable to the lack of access to full benefits, potential overwork, and inadequate training.

Algorithmic Management

- Platform work is heavily influenced by digital means and AI, what creates the possibility of leading to over-control
- risk of discrimination, surveillance, and intensified workload

Lack of Health and Safety Education

- There is a notable deficiency in health and safety education for workers, increasing their vulnerability to workplace hazards

Unionization Challenges

- Platform workers face significant obstacles in associating and taking collective action due to the fragmented and digital nature of their work environments.

Ergonomic Issues

- Teleworkers often lack proper ergonomic setups, leading to musculoskeletal disorders and other health issues due to inadequate home office environments.

Difficulty in Work-Life Balance

- Telework blurs the boundaries between work and personal life, leading to issues such as hyperconnectivity, increased workloads, social isolation, and heightened stress.

Intensified Workloads

- Part-time workers often face intensified workloads within shorter time frames, which can lead to physical and psychological distress

Social Isolation

- Both telework, and part-time work can result in social and family isolation, exacerbating stress and psychosocial problems

Chronic Health Conditions

- Workers in new forms of work are at risk of developing chronic health issues such as high blood pressure, tachycardia, diabetes, allergies, and obesity

Telework Infrastructure

- Portugal's technical investments during the COVID-19 pandemic have improved support for telework, though there is still a need for better risk assessment and ergonomic verification, not only in Portugal, but in all partner countries.

Improved Communication

- Enhanced communication between companies and prevention services is crucial for effectively addressing organizational changes and occupational risks



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THE PARTNERSHIP



ZDOPS

(Association of employers in craft and small business of Slovenia (lead))

Website: <https://zdops.si/>



MCSMEs

(Malta Chamber of SMEs)

Website: <https://www.smechamber.mt/>



PIMEC

(Pimec Petita i Mitjana Empresa da Catalunya, Spain)

Website: <https://pimec.org/en>



GSEVEE

(Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen & Merchants)

Website: <https://www.gsevee.gr/>



CCP

(Confederação do Comércio e Serviços de Portugal)

Website: <https://www.ccp.pt>



SOPS

(Trade Union of Crafts and Small Business)

Website: <https://sops.si/about/>



SME United*

(Association of Craft Employers and SMEs at the European level as **associated partner**)

Website: <https://www.smeunited.eu/>



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