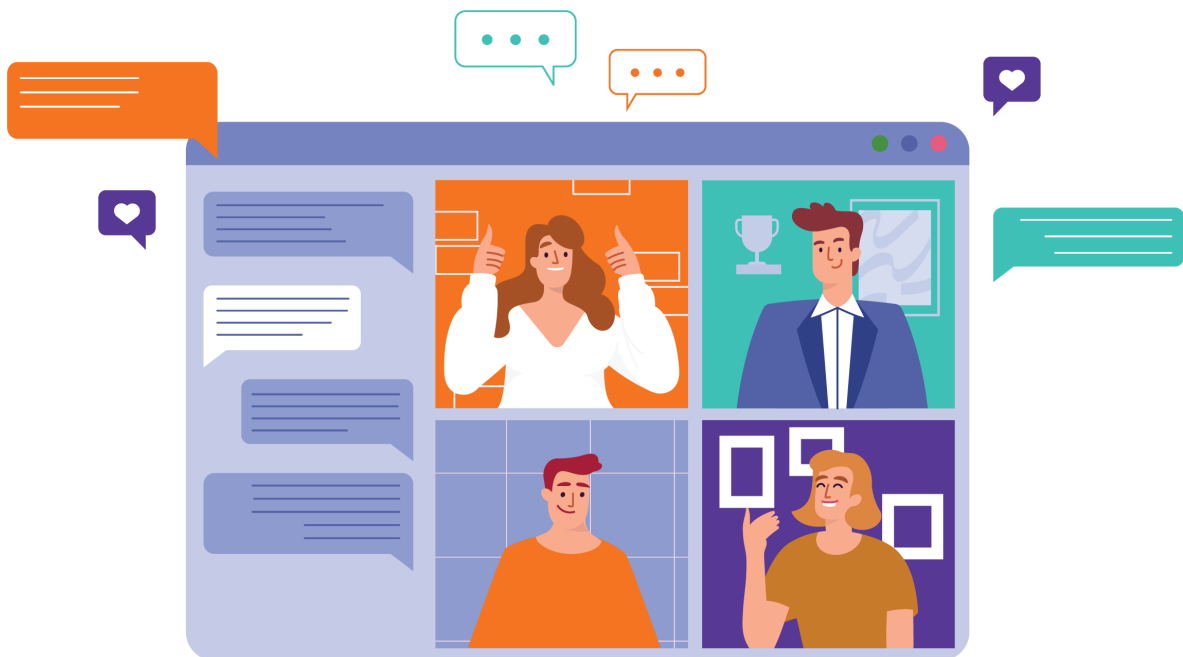




# Toolkit for Virtual Team leaders, HR professionals and Managers





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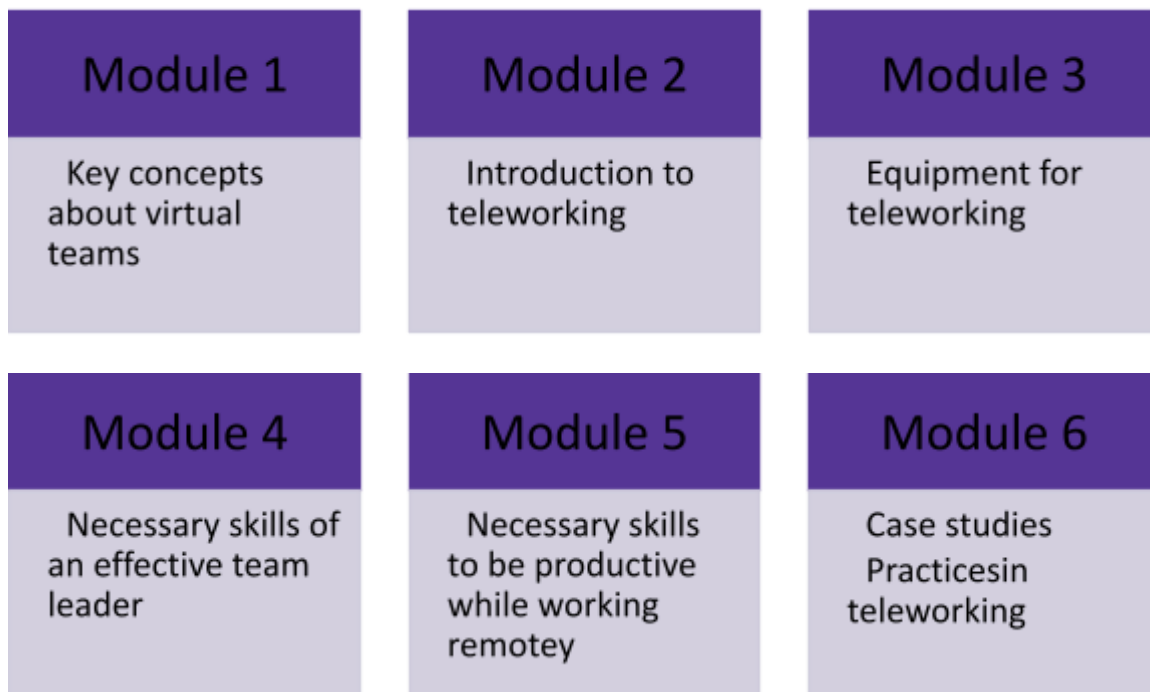


## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Objectives of the toolkit/ How to utilize it

This practical and innovative toolkit is created to provide support to Small and Medium-sized enterprises' (SMEs) team leaders, managers, HR professionals, trainers and eWorkers in adopting best practices for teleworking.

The overall scope of the toolkit is to assist the users in infusing contemporary practices to engage in productive management of teams working remotely. It is designed in the form of a step-by-step toolkit for effective management of Virtual Teams for enhanced employee engagement, wellbeing and productivity. The toolkit covers the following 6 Modules:



Each module begins with the necessary theoretical information on the topic, followed by resources required for implementation. In addition, handouts and activity sheets provide the user with an opportunity to deepen your understanding of the new acquired knowledge, while each module completes with an assessment tool to reflect and evaluate the appropriate next steps for your organization.

An overall readiness checklist was also created in order to help you reflect on the necessary actions for your organization and assist in creating a compact plan for your future steps in enhancing remote working and management in your organization.

## 1.2. Definition of key concepts

**1.2.1. Remote team:** A group of people brought together for a unified purpose or project. While they all answer to the same organization and usually the same manager, they may physically be in different offices, cities, or even countries.

**1.2.2. Hybrid – remote team:** A hybrid team is a flexible work structure where some employees work remotely, and other team members work from a central location or office. They may have the chance to get together, or they may not.

**1.2.3. Virtual Team:** A virtual team is a group of workers who communicate and work together using information and communication technologies (digital tools). While they can be located in the same physical area, virtual teams are often distributed, working remotely in different parts of the city, state or country — even on the other side of the world! The term can also refer to groups or teams that work together asynchronously or across organizational levels. Team members may report to different managers.

**1.2.4. Virtual Team leadership:** Virtual team leaders should attain skills that are more complex, as the leader of a virtual team must be able to inspire and lead their team without physically meeting them, without seeing them every day and without being able to model appropriate and desirable behavior in a physically visible way.

**1.2.5. Physical Wellbeing:** The ability to improve the functioning of one’s body through healthy eating, sleep and good exercise habits (Healthy Nutrition, Sleep management, Exercise).

**1.2.6. Emotional wellbeing:** The ability to adapt when confronted with adversity (resilience), manage one’s emotions and generate emotions that lead to pleasant feelings (generate positive emotions, humor, spirituality, savoring, optimism, adaptability, self-compassion, mindfulness, mental health).

**1.2.7. Social – wellbeing:** the ability to communicate, develop meaningful relationships with others and create one’s emotional support network (gratitude, forgiveness, verbal and non-verbal communication, empathy, acts of kindness, Mentoring, Diversity and inclusion, social connectedness at work, teamwork, team building activities, Interpersonal skills).

**1.2.8. Digital wellbeing:** Describes the impact ICTs (e.g., emails, instant chats) have on people’s mental, emotional and physical health.

## 1.3. Field research findings

This toolkit was created to specifically address the current needs of SMEs team leaders, HR professionals, managers and eWorkers who work remotely. In order to achieve this, a needs analysis assessment was conducted in each partner country through a mixed method research design. Specifically, a qualitative questionnaire survey was launched in each country with a minimum target of 20 completed survey responses. A purposive sampling method was applied targeting Team Leaders, HR professionals and managers. A total of 128 responses were collected through the questionnaires reaching the predetermined goals.

The questionnaire consisted of multiple questions covering the following topics:

- Challenges and changes at work
- Current needs on skills development
- Current needs on ICTs (digital tools)
- Desired areas for future training

In addition, a focus group was implemented in each country with SMEs team leaders, HR professionals and managers, reaching a total of 47 people in our target groups. The main focus was to use a qualitative method to gain a spherical view of the specific needs of our target group at the moment. Below you can see the main findings of each country's research.

### 1.3.1. Cyprus

Through both research methods (questionnaires and focus group) of the field research implemented in Cyprus, some common findings arise. The first finding is that the majority of the participants prefer working from home compared to going regularly in the office. A hybrid model was the most preferable working arrangement, but only if participants have the control of scheduling when they will work from the office.

Another common finding of the research is that HR professionals and team leaders are concerned about their employees' well-being and ways in which they can support them in maintaining a healthy work-life balance. HR Professionals and Team Leaders reported via both research methods that they would like to receive further information about enhancing their employees' well-being (emotional and social) and wellness and ways they can support them in keeping a healthy work-life balance.

A third common finding was the topic of keeping the connectedness of their teams on high levels. Some measures were already reported, such as more social meetings between the employee groups, more 1-1 meetings between team leaders and each employee and often short check-in meetings. The reason the HR Professionals and Team Leaders focus on connectedness, as reported, is due to considering it a major factor of keeping employees highly engaged and productive. Thus, they reported being open and keen to receive more information on how they can achieve this in order to sustain high levels of productivity and help their employees maintain social wellbeing.

Fourth, it was clearly reported and stated that virtual teams and remote workers is a new way of working which seems that will remain even after the Covid-19 pandemic ceases, thus they are willing to provide time and effort to be educated and informed in ways (programs, virtual tools e.x.t) that they can implement in their work. Specifically, they requested tools for remote working and time management, file sharing tools, infrastructure and tools to support teleworking and training, tools for project management work, and communication between team leaders, managers, and their co-workers.

In conclusion, it is evident that the project “Virtual Teams” has a lot to offer to cover the current needs of HR Professionals and Team Leaders in Cyprus.

### 1.3.2. Greece

The most important challenges encountered by a virtual team leader are building trust in employees and maintaining not only the active participation of team members but also the communication between co-workers. Moreover, the training of employees is necessary, and they must have constant control and good management of the new problems (e.g., technical issues). HR professionals have to deal with different ways of interviews and recruitment. They must constantly support innovative ideas and the development of new skills, develop e-media skills and deal with issues such as internet fatigue, isolation and stress. Managers have to ensure that employees work properly while motivating them to work as a "team" and provide them with the necessary technological tools and applications. They must also ensure the consistency of the operation of the system and organize the time and work to be carried out.



In order to promote employee well-being and efficiency, organizations apply some practices. A very active teams' community is implemented and available to all employees, including information regarding well-being, nutrition, entertainment, and various training courses regarding digital skills and management. They use very good communication tools and project management tools.

They have fixed meetings between internal teams and lessons within the department. They also provide employees with free seminars with fitness and psychological support programs as well as an anonymous telephone line providing psychological support to employees. Issues are discussed among team members to make jointly with respect and cooperation to achieve goals.

Most employees feel more productive in the workplace, so they want to return. The main challenge is the fact that communication with colleagues and the work environment is lost. At the same time, working at home brings difficulties as there are more distractions due to the absence of a separate and appropriate workplace at home. Other problems are the lack of tools and resources and the fact that work-life balance is often lost, as it is difficult for some employees to "turn off work mode" at the end of the day. The new conditions create the need for both digital skills training and psychological support for employees.

There are some productive practices that Team Leaders/HR professionals/Managers follow to ensure the engagement and well-being of employees in the new conditions and prevent alienation. First, it is important to reward hard work and efficiency with various benefits and incentives, but also to adhere to the schedule, breaks, and five-day work, so that there is time for personal and family life. Some interesting suggestions are online free fitness classes, online joint lunch breaks as a group, organization of excursions -when allowed by the state regulations, programs for healthy lifestyle tips, training through skills development platforms and time management instructions from the HR professional.

### 1.3.3. Ireland

The findings of the field research show that team members and team leaders face a variety of obstacles, the most prevalent of which is communication. As can be seen from the surveys and focus groups carried out, team members miss their coworkers and do not feel the same connection when working remotely. As well as this Managers and team leaders mentioned how they have had a hard time trusting team members to complete tasks with minimal supervision. Respondents highlighted how



they can always see work being done in a face-to-face work environment, such as an office, but this is not the case when working remotely, which might make managers feel "paranoid." To fix this problem, there has to be a lot more trust between employees and management.

As for workers/employees, when their working day is done, e-workers find it difficult to turn off their computers. They have digital fatigue, which may be related to communication problems. Emails, Zoom meetings, messaging, and no genuine face-to-face connection are used for communication, and we know that this is what e-Workers are looking forward to the most when they return to the office.

#### 1.3.4. France

The survey in France indicates that virtual teams have grown considerably in recent months because of the covid pandemic. This changed the way managers/ directors and HR professionals think about their work and communication with their employees. There has been a real adaptation to the digital tools available to create specific working environments that enable employees to flourish, work effectively and enhance their well-being at work. They also realized the need to make themselves available to their employees and to develop the necessary skills to deal with remote issues.

The survey as a whole highlighted the difficulties of setting up this working environment, which they were not used to, but they learned a lot from this experience and some of them continue to use tools and good practices in their daily work.

A majority of them enjoyed this particular period, even if it was not always easy. But they have seen the involvement and motivation of their staff evolve according to the strategies they used. Productivity was much better for some.

The more you show them that you have confidence in them, in their remote work, the more the employee feels valued and is, therefore, more likely to be more productive and efficient.

#### 1.3.5. Spain



The survey in Spain showed that most participants agree that they are equally productive both at home and in the office, while the rest emphasize only at home. There were no results for being more productive in the office. The majority of respondents say they would like to return to the office partially, followed by those who say they would not like to return at all. A minority is unclear about their decision.

The majority of respondents say that if their employer were to ask them to return to the office full-time, this would slightly affect their opinion of their employer. Others say it would have no effect and a small group say it would affect very negatively and positively respectively. In addition, seeing colleagues is what they look forward to most about returning to the office, followed by those who highlight the working environment. Contact with the public/partners/clients and time away from home also

feature, although to a lesser extent. In terms of what they are least looking forward to, the majority of participants do not want to commute to work. There is also a group of participants who also do not want to wear a mask or use public transport.

The biggest challenge respondents are currently facing whilst working from home are digital well-being (too much time spent on screens and meetings) and physical wellbeing, as well as their physical workplace and work-life balance. The main challenges faced by the virtual team leaders were building trust (e.g., managers worry that workers aren't completing work), keeping their teams motivated/ engaged and difficulty in fostering collaboration between team members. Participants reported that they felt trusted working from home and they are willing to try new or different tactics to manage teams that work remotely even though the same percentage reports they have the tools and resources to support the remote workers.

Skills they would like to receive more information and support are Time management, Psychological Resilience and Ability to maintain work-life balance

Digital tools they would like to learn more about Infrastructure and tools necessary for organizations to support teleworking and training, Tools for remote working and time management and Tools available for remote working for managing project work.

Both the results of the questionnaire and the focus group follow the same line:

- The importance of not assuming that just because of remote work, participants have mastered digital skills and tools.
- The importance of not forgetting the emotional well-being of leaders and workers during remote work situations.



- The importance of time management and productivity, both for workers, team leaders and HR professionals.

### 1.3.6. Slovenia

According to the Slovenian survey, the new working conditions have created several challenges and changes in the way Team Leaders, HR managers, managers and employee's work. Team leaders mentioned they have difficulties in coordinating team members, communication and there is not enough time to build relationships, while one of the remaining main issues are technical issues that require communication with competent technicians.

Summarizing the main findings of the questionnaire and the focus group discussion, there is a need to improve digital skills, a desire to maintain the wellbeing of participants and a need to ensure that employees interact well with digital tools. The majority expressed a desire to improve digital skills and to learn how to use online tools to make remote working easier and more productive, but above all there is a strong desire for good networking and communication between colleagues.

Based on the statements collected, it can be said that the training of employees is necessary to respond to the new conditions and constant control is required, so that the overall process of remote work is reliable, productive and efficient and that digital tools are extremely useful if used properly. In order to get the most out of them, participants want to receive as much knowledge and information as possible in the areas of communication and social cohesion of team members (through digital tools), they want to improve their digital skills and their handling of online tools, and they want to maintain their well-being and the right work-life balance, knowing that this is the only way to prevent burnout and to reach their maximum potential.

## 2. Introduction to teleworking

### 2.1. Teleworking

Teleworking refers to all types of work performed outside a default place of work with the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to communicate back to one's workplace (Madsen, 2001)

The term "telecommuting" was one of the first, proposed by Nilles back in 1975. Since then, a lot of different definitions have been provided. There are various distinctions between the terminology proposed for different types of teleworking taking into account the physical place the work is conducted, the proximity of the worker with the physical office etc. In Europe and for the purposes for the current toolkit, the term of "e-worker" is going to be used interchangeably with teleworker, remote worker and virtual team member, as an effort to include and incorporate all the different types of workers and team leaders working partially or fully outside of the traditional office concept (Charalampous, Grant, Tramontano & Michailidis, 2019).

Based on the research conducted for the purposes of the Virtual Team's project, e-workers mentioned that they prefer working fully remotely or in a hybrid model (with some physical presence at the office), only if they have some form of control on their schedule upon when to work from the office.

## 2.2. The need for teleworking

The need of teleworking became widely evident after the rise of the Covid-19 pandemic, which forced companies abruptly to either “shut down their engines” completely or find a way to work remotely. But this was not the beginning as many might think. Research shows that from the early 2000 and forth, companies are relying more and more on teleworking as a means of employability. This allowed them to employ talents in a geographically large area and reduce overhead expenses and cost of office facilities. In addition, it is more environmentally friendly since emissions from commuting are diminished. These were made possible with the expansion and growth of technology and the internet which provided many tools for companies to work efficiently in distance (American Psychological Association, 2019).

Even those were evident before the pandemic, the covid-19 pandemic raised the option to a necessity and many companies transitioned during that time. Research for Virtual Teams’ project also suggests that teleworking is something that came into our working lives to stay permanently.

## 2.3. Basic infrastructure for efficient teleworking

In order to create a proper working environment for an e-worker there is a need to provide them with the necessary technological infrastructure. There are a lot of components that can be added in the list below but the ones mentioned are considered as the most crucial.

**1. Cloud computing technology:** Cloud computing is necessary to work in any form of e-working efficiently and provide a good working experience for the e-workers. In addition, a cloud computing technology can be cost effective since you invest less in other ways of infrastructure and equipment. In addition, it is scalable, referring to the many different options to be added or removed as required to individualize them with your company’s needs so you pay only for the services you use. Last, it is convenient since it provides easy access, collaboration and file sharing in different locations in seconds.

**2. Business apps:** Once you have attained a cloud computing technology, there are many cloud-based business apps to further enhance collaboration, for example apps related to communication and project management apps. These provide the e-worker with the same accessibility as an office environment. In order to integrate



business apps needs some planning and time for adjustment but research shows it pays off in the long-term.

**3. Unified Communicators:** These allow the e-workers having open communication channels to boost efficiency, convenience and smoother business operations. They come with other benefits, such as improved collaboration, increased productivity and efficient distribution of workload. There are many tools available to pick from and companies should choose one that fits their needs since communication is a key component for successful e-working. The most important factor is to allow for video conferencing since research shows that virtual images and live interactions are key components for boosting communication.

**4. Project Management Tools:** Depending on the type of your work there are a lot of tools for Project Managing. This is essential for managing the workload, enabling communication and synchronous collaboration between e-workers. This also allows Team Leaders to have an overview of the team members' work without having to

“check” on them and trust is built through transparency. Trust is one of the most highlighted areas of e-workers of all rankings through a company which was noted in Virtual Teams' Project research is of highly importance and one of the most difficult to achieve through the transitioning to e-working environments.

**4. Data backup and recovery:** Transitioning from office work environment to e-working raises the importance of data backup and recovery since the work being developed is in virtual and the internet is used. Therefore, an automatic backup system is considered essential.

**5. Network Security and Malware Protection:** One of the biggest threats that organizations working remotely are facing is their system being hacked. This can be costly both in financial terms and on productivity. This highlights the need for companies to invest in good network security and malware protection while making sure that they are up to date for best protection (Ewaycorp, 2021).

## 2.4. Available tools for teleworking

Providing e-workers with tools to work effectively and efficiently remotely starts from the basic elements of software and hardware (equipment). The best practice is for the organizations to provide them to the e-workers. The list was developed by the Virtual Teams' Project research survey and through relative literature.

**Basic equipment:** cloud-based technology, desktop monitor, headphones, internet access, keyboards, mouse.

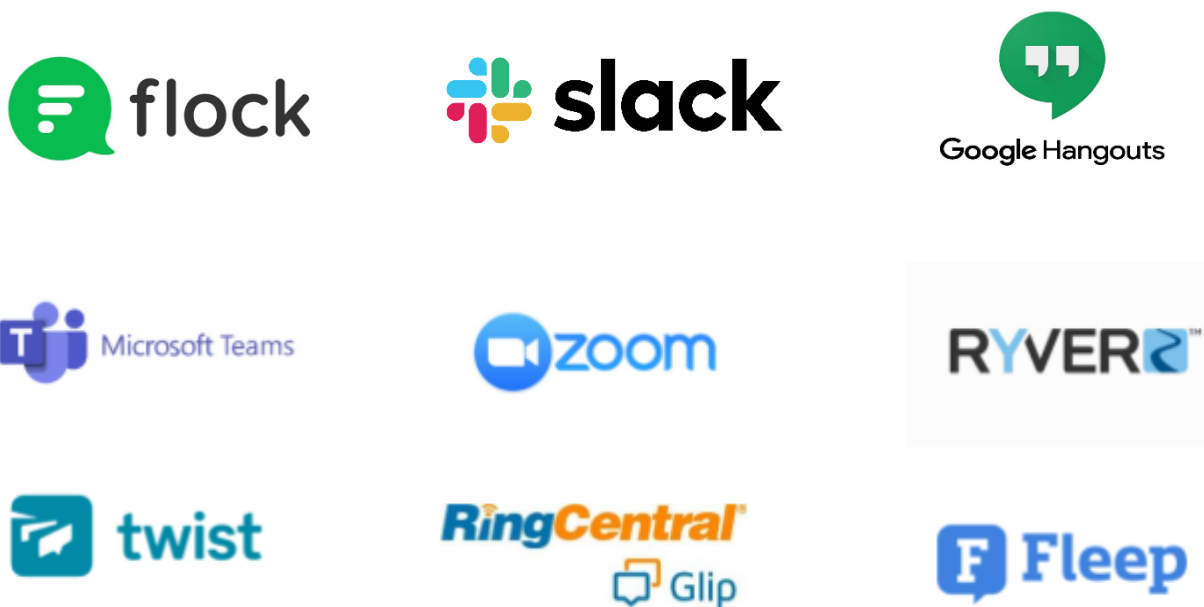


**Tools for managing project work for e-working:**

Teamwork, Jira, AirTable, Asana, Pivotal Tracker, Trello, Whike.



**Tools for communication for Team Leaders/ HR managers/ e-workers:** Slack, Flock, Google Hangouts chat, Microsoft Teams, Ryver, Glip, Twist, Fleep, Zoom).



**Tools for remote working Time Management** Google Calendar, Time Doctor, I Done This, Pocket, Rescue, Toggl, Timely, Everhour



**File Sharing tools:** Google Drive, Box, Dropbox, OneDrive, SpiderOak



**Infrastructure and tools necessary for organisations to support teleworking and training:** Zoom, Webex, BlueJeans, GoToMeeting, join.me, Skype for Business



## 2.5. Resources for implementation

Implementing e-working effectively and efficiently is a growth procedure and many steps can be taken to implement it successfully:

- Set boundaries between work and life. Set clear time schedules of when you are working and when you are not working and communicate these to your team and family members.
- Set a designated area for work which you use only for work. This can be a separate room in the house or a special desk or surface area.
- Take regular break intervals while working where you leave the desk and do something else (it might be a walk around the block, making a coffee etc.)
- Disconnect from technology for at least a few hours a day
- Keep connected with your colleagues through live chats
- Communicate difficulties in all areas of your work in order to find solutions (Dossetto, 2021)
- Reach out to your team or line manager when you feel lonely or isolated

## 2.6. Handouts and activity sheets

### Activity 1:

Use the list below with the basic infrastructure for teleworking and check the boxes your organization is already using. Take a few minutes to think of how you could incorporate the ones missing from your organization and how you can further enhance the use or the effectiveness of the ones' your organization is already using.

	Does my organization incorporate this?	How can my organization improve on this?
Cloud computing technology	YES / NO	
Business apps	YES / NO	
Unified Communicators	YES / NO	
Project Management Tools	YES / NO	



Data backup and recovery	YES / NO	
Network Security and Malware Protection	YES / NO	

### Activity 2:

Create an online anonymous questionnaire about the teleworking infrastructure of your organization asking your team members to respond on how satisfied they are about the different components of the existing infrastructure and incorporate sections in which you ask their ideas/ feedback of what is necessary for better improving it and how.

5. What part of teleworking infrastructure is mostly needed to incorporate or to enhance in your company in order to better assist your team members? What are the steps you can follow in order to achieve this for your team?

## 3. Necessary equipment for teleworking

### 3.1. Necessary equipment for effective remote working

Working from home or virtually is growing faster than ever and shows no sign of slowing down. Thousands of organisations in Europe and the world have shifted to working remotely. The uncertainties brought by COVID-19 have sped up virtual teams and teleworking. An essential part of effective and productive teleworking is the necessary equipment and digital tools.



**Computers and Laptops:** There is a consensus that the essential equipment that virtual workers need is a computer or a laptop. Laptops or computers should be fully upgraded in terms of software and hardware.

**Headsets:** There is a wide variety of headsets, with each one having particular features; however, there are a few particular components to consider when it comes to choosing an appropriate headset for teleworking, such as quality of sound and comfort.

**Webcams:** The resolution, audio, and frame rate are considered important dimensions when choosing a webcam for teleworking. A webcam with HD video quality would suffice as their 720p determination conveys a clear picture with sufficient high quality.

**Docking Stations:** Docking stations are small devices where you can simply plug in your keyboard, mouse, monitor, or even headphones to a docking station. This way, you can still use your laptop on an external monitor with your preferred set of keyboard and mouse.

**Office furniture (desk and chair):** Tele-Workers require a set of office equipment to feel comfortable during teleworking. An ergonomic chair planned to keep the back and neck comfortably in a standard shape is vital for teleworking, while having an appropriate desk with sufficient space is also essential (e.g., standing desks).

**Data Backup and Recovery:** Protecting your critical data is crucial; thus, remote employees should access backup equipment.

Additional equipment may include the following: Laptop Riser, Phone, microphone, Power strip/extension cord, Printer, Ergonomic modifications (e.g., keyboard tray, glare filter, footstool, etc.)

## 3.2. Necessary equipment for effective remotely project management

### **Google Workspace:**



Google Workspace is a collection of cloud computing, productivity and collaboration tools, software and products developed and marketed by Google, including Gmail, Drive, Meet and more.

Website: <https://workspace.google.com>



Buffer provides a social media management platform that enables companies to plan, schedule, publish, and analyse social media content to help drive meaningful engagement.

Website: <https://buffer.com/>

**Airtable:**



Airtable is a relational database tool and an online collaboration tool. Before you brush it off as boring because of the word database, know that Airtable is easy to use and highly versatile. You can use it to manage work, track and organise inventories, plan an event, and much more.

Website: <https://www.airtable.com/>

**Wrike:**



Wrike is an easy-to-use tool for streamlining team members' internal project management and collaboration processes.

Website: <https://try.wrike.com/>

**Monday:**



Monday.com is a customizable web and mobile work management platform. It is designed to help teams and organisations increase operational efficiency by tracking projects and workflows, visualizing data, and team collaboration. It includes automation capabilities and supports integrations with other work apps.

Website: <https://monday.com/>

**Teamwork:**



Teamwork is a cloud-based project management solution that provides businesses functionalities to manage different operations of a project. Features include task lists, time tracking, file uploads and messages. Teamwork helps teams manage group objectives, communicate and establish business processes.

Website: <https://www.teamwork.com>



**Everhour:**



Everhour is a team-oriented time tracking software product that was launched in 2015.

Website: <https://everhour.com/>

**Asana:**



Asana is designed to help teams organise, track, and manage their workloads, making it easier to work on projects together. Slickly designed, this software-as-a-service allows teams to create projects, assign work to teammates, set deadlines, and chat about specific tasks, all in one place.

Website: <https://asana.com/>

**Trello:**



Trello helps teams move work forward. Collaborate, manage projects, and reach new productivity peaks. From high rises to the home office, the way your team works is unique—accomplish it all with Trello.

Website: [trello.com/en](https://trello.com/en)

**Harvest/ Forecast:**



Harvest is a web-based tracking tool that allows you to monitor your team members' time and budget on individual projects or tasks.

Website: [www.getharvest.com/forecast](http://www.getharvest.com/forecast)

**Jira:**



Jira Software is part of a family of products designed to help teams of all types manage work. Originally, Jira was designed as a bug and issue tracker. However, today, Jira has evolved into a powerful work management tool for all kinds of use cases, from requirements and test case management to agile software development.

Website: <https://www.atlassian.com/software/jira/guides/use-cases/what-is-jira-used-for>



**Pivotal Tracker:**



Pivotal Tracker is the agile project management tool of choice for developers worldwide for real-time collaboration.

Website: <https://www.pivotaltracker.com/features>

**Redbooth:**



Redbooth allows you to manage your team's projects and get more done with tasks. Hubstaff allows you to track your time automatically. Integrate them and have a powerful way to manage your company online.

Website: <https://fleep.io/> <https://redbooth.com/>

**Google Drive:**



Google Drive is a file storage and synchronization service developed by Google. Google Drive allows users to store files in the cloud, synchronize files across devices, and share files.

Website: [https://www.google.com/intl/en\\_cy/drive/](https://www.google.com/intl/en_cy/drive/)

**Dropbox:**



Dropbox is a cloud-based file hosting service that helps its users to store their data in one place, which they can make accessible to whomever they wish.

Website: <https://www.dropbox.com>

**Basecamp:**



Basecamp is an online collaboration app that lets people manage their work together and communicate with one another. You use it to keep track of all the tasks, deadlines, files, discussions, and announcements around work.

Website: <https://basecamp.com/>

**Milanote:**





Milanote is an easy-to-use tool to organise your ideas and projects into visual boards.

Website: <https://milanote.com/>

### 3.3. Essential tools for communication and collaboration

#### *Slack:*



Slack is a messaging app for businesses that connects people to the information that they need. By bringing people together to work as one unified team, Slack transforms how organisations communicate.

Website: <https://slack.com/>

#### *Microsoft Teams/ Office 365:*



Microsoft Teams is the hub for team collaboration in Microsoft 365 that integrates the people, content, and tools your team needs to be more engaged and effective. Teams can be created for departments or even projects within and between departments.

Website: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software>

#### *Powwownow:*



The in-built web meeting tool allows you to share screens and notes, take feedback, and record important meetings, so no vital decisions slip through the cracks.

Website: <https://www.powwownow.co.uk/>

#### *Ryver:*



Ryver provides a way to organise your team collaboration in one app. You can seamlessly organise your conversations, assign tasks, and hold voice & video conference calls without ever needing to use multiple applications.

Website: <https://ryver.com/>

#### *10to8 Meeting Scheduling Software:*





10to8 is an online scheduling and appointment reminder software system built to be easy for businesses. It comes with a web-based booking calendar and supports email and SMS notifications for you and your clients.

Website: <https://10to8.com/>

***PukkaTeam:***



Pukka Team offers regular live snapshots of your team throughout the day, allowing everyone to know one's availability and also giving a feeling of togetherness (don't worry, it does have privacy options too). It integrates with hangouts, skype, slack, etc. to provide video calling features as well.

Website: <https://pukcateam.com/>

***Krisp:***



Krisp is a perfect noise cancelling app. Mute background noise in any communication app. Krisp removes background noise from calls, recordings, podcasts, live streams and more.

Website: <https://krisp.ai/?ref=get>

***Twist:***



Twist is a sync messaging for teams burned out by real-time, all-the-time communication.

Website: <https://twist.com/>

***Fleep:***



Fleep messenger enables communication within and across organisations - be it your team chats, project communication or 1:1 conversation.

Website: <https://fleep.io/>

***Mattermost:***



This is an open-source, self-hostable online chat service with file sharing, search, and integrations. It is designed as an internal chat for organisations and companies, and most markets themselves as open-source.

Website: <https://mattermost.com/>

**Chanty:**



Chanty helps teams improve productivity and business communication.

Website: <https://www.chanty.com/>

**Google Hangouts:**



Google Hangouts is a cross-platform instant messaging service developed by Google.

Website: <https://hangouts.google.com/>

**Flock:**



Flock is a proprietary messaging and collaboration tool. Flock allows users to configure external apps and integrations from the Flock App Store and receive notifications and updates directly in Flock.

Website: <https://www.flock.com/>

### 3.4. Essential tools for design and development

**Canva:**



Canva is a graphic design platform used to create social media graphics, presentations, posters, documents and other visual content. The app includes



templates for users to use. The platform is free and offers paid subscriptions such as Canva Pro and Canva for Enterprise for additional functionality.

Website: <https://www.canva.com/>

***Paletton:***



Paletton is not just a professional's tool. It was designed to help all sorts of colour projects, from professional work to your kids' school projects.

Website: <https://paletton.com/#uid=1000u0kllllaFw0g0qFqFg0w0aF>

***PicsArt:***



PicsArt all-in-one online Photo Editor features endless editing tools to help you create professional-grade content even if you don't have any experience in the designing field.

Website: <https://picsart.com/>

***Colors:***



Colors is a colour palette generator. It can either generate an entire palette randomly or based on input such as a logo.

Website: <https://colors.co/>

***Pixelmator:***



Pixelmator is a graphic editor built upon a combination of open-source and macOS technologies.

Website: <https://www.pixelmator.com/mac/>



**Adobe Creative Cloud:**



Is a set of applications and services from Adobe Inc. that gives subscribers access to a collection of software used for graphic design, video editing, web development, photography, along with a set of mobile applications and also some optional cloud services.

Website: <https://www.adobe.com/>

**Chrome DevTools:**



Is a set of web developer tools built directly into the Google Chrome browser.

Website: <https://developer.chrome.com/docs/devtools/>

**GitHub:**



Is a software development platform.

Website: <https://github.com/>

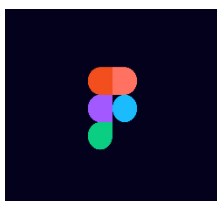
**Atom:**



Atom is a free and open-source text and source code editor for macOS, Linux, and Microsoft Windows with support for plug-ins written in JavaScript and embedded Git Control.

Website: <https://atom.io/>

**Figma:**





Figma is a vector graphics editor and primarily web-based prototyping tool, with additional offline features enabled by desktop applications for mac, IOS and Windows.

Website: <https://www.figma.com/>

#### ***InVision:***



Is a prototyping tool created for designers by designers. It allows you to quickly and easily create interactive mockups for your designs.

Website: <https://www.invisionapp.com/>

### **3.5. Essential tools for writing and editing**

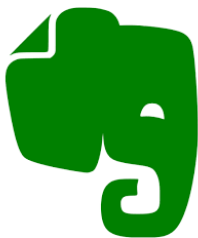
#### ***Grammarly:***



Grammarly is a writing assistant that offers you specific suggestions to help you improve your writing.

Website: <https://www.grammarly.com/>

#### ***Evernote:***



Evernote is an app designed for note-taking, organising, task management, and archiving.

Website: <https://evernote.com/>

#### ***TextExpander:***

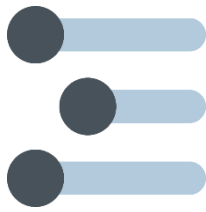


TextExpander is a productivity app that automatically uses keyboard shortcuts to insert longer blocks of frequently used text called snippets.

Website: <https://textexpander.com/>



### **WorkFlowy:**



WorkFlowy is a web-based organizational tool that enables users to create lists: personal to-dos, notes, team projects, research papers, and many more. It is a text-based, zoomable document that is flexible enough for organizing ideas in one's own way.

Website: <https://workflowy.com/b/>

## **3.6. Necessary equipment for teleworking and training infrastructure**



**Zoom:** It provides video telephony and online chat services through a cloud-based peer-to-peer software platform and is used for teleconferencing, telecommuting, distance education, and social relations.

Website: <https://zoom.us/>

### **Cisco WebEx:**



Cisco Webex is a video conferencing and collaboration product suite. This cloud-based collaboration suite comprises software including Webex Meetings, Webex Teams and Webex Devices.

Website: <https://www.webex.com/>

### **Skype for Business:**



Skype for Business was an enterprise software application for instant messaging and video telephony developed by Microsoft as part of the Microsoft Office suite. It is designed for use with the on-premises Skype for Business Server software, and a software as a service version offered as part of Office 365.

Website: <https://www.skype.com/en/>



### BlueJeans:



Provides an interoperable cloud-based video conferencing service that connects participants across various devices and conferencing platforms.

Website: <https://www.bluejeans.com/>

### Join.me:



Is a web-based collaboration software application for screen-sharing and online meetings. Users must first download and install join to share a desktop or host a meeting.me software. Mobile apps are available for Android and iOS.

Website: <https://www.join.me/>

## 3.7. Resources for implementation

Below are cited some indicative resources of the equipment mentioned above and tools:

- *Working from home 101: Every remote worker's guide to the essential tools for telecommuting.* Link: <https://www.zdnet.com/article/remote-working-101-professionals-guide-to-the-tools-of-the-trade/>
- *The Remote Work Mega Guide: Everything You Need To Know About Working From Home In The Age Of COVID-19.* Link: <https://skillcrush.com/blog/how-to-work-remote/>
- *Best Technology for Working Remotely: 6 Remote Working Tech Tools.* Link: <https://owllabs.com/blog/remote-working-technology>
- *Getting the most from remote working.* Link: <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/relations/flexible-working/remote-working-top-tips#73399>
- Learning Zoom. Link: <https://www.linkedin.com/learning/learning-zoom>

## 3.8. Handouts and activity sheets

*Checklist for Essential Equipment for Teleworking*

Equipment	Yes	No
Laptop / PC		
Headsets		
Webcams		
Docking Station		
Office furniture (desk and chair)		



Data Backup and Recovery		
Other...Please specify		

#### Remote Work Readiness Checklist for better Team Communication

	Yes	No
Has your organisation implemented software that allows for video conferencing and multi-user calls to conduct virtual meetings?		
Has your organisation created a policy and protocol for virtual meeting etiquette?		
Has your organisation implemented a method of asynchronous communication besides email? Examples: Slack for text messages, Loom for video messages.		
Does your organisation make use of project management or collaboration software? Examples: Trello, Basecamp, Asana		

1. What are the 4 essential digital tools that your company would benefit from at the moment and how?

## 4. Skills of effective team leaders

### 4.1. Necessary skills for effective virtual team leaders

A manager, now more than ever, must become a leader. A leader capable of motivating, inspiring and coordinating his/her team to run like clockwork. The problem is that many companies assume that manager and leader are the same concept and therefore it is still easy to find organizations in which managers lack the necessary skills to assume that responsibility.

According to Daniel Goleman (2008 and 2019), it is not IQ or technical skills, but emotional intelligence, a group of five skills that allow the best leaders to maximize their performance and that of their followers. For Goleman there are 6 styles of leadership:

- The Coercive style: The "do what I say" approach can be very effective in a renovation or natural disaster situation or when working with problematic employees. But, in most situations, it inhibits the flexibility of the organization and lowers the motivation of workers.



- The Authoritarian style: An authoritarian leader takes a "come with me" approach; It stipulates the general objective, but gives freedom for people to choose their means of reaching it. This style works especially when a company is drifting, but is less effective when the leader works with a team of experts who are more experienced than s/he is.
- The Affiliative Style: The hallmark of the affiliative leader is a "people first" attitude. This style is especially useful for creating harmony or raising morale in a group. But just emphasizing compliments can also cause uncorrected poor performances. Likewise, affiliative leaders rarely offer advice, often putting employees in a dilemma.
- The Democratic style: the impact of this style on the organization's environment is not as great as one might imagine. By giving workers a voice in decision-making, democratic leaders foster flexibility and responsibility in the organization and help generate new ideas. But sometimes the price is endless meetings and confused employees who feel they lack a leader.
- The Pioneering Style - A leader who sets high performance standards and sets an example has a very positive impact on highly competent and motivated employees. But others tend to be overwhelmed by the demands for excellence of such a leader, and annoyed by his/her tendency to take charge of any situation.
- The Formative style: this style focuses more on personal development than on strictly work-related tasks. It works well when employees are already aware of their weaknesses and want to improve, but not when they are reluctant to change their habits.

Each of them is derived from different emotional intelligence competencies, works better in specific situations, and affects the organization's environment in different ways.

Being able to choose between different styles when circumstances require it creates the best environment in an organization and optimizes business performance. The more styles a leader masters, the better.

### **What are the skills of a leader?**

Every leader should develop certain skills that can help him/her lead a team, either in person or in virtual environments. Leadership skills are qualities that allow people to make better decisions within a framework of responsibility, allocate available resources more efficiently, plan wisely, and manage people from motivation, enthusiasm and commitment.



These capacities do not have to do with the different types of leadership, but with the personal qualities of the person who is in charge of guiding others within a team.

- **Knowing how to delegate:** For some managers, delegating is a synonym of losing control over the project and that is why they end up performing many tasks that do not correspond to them. If we accompany the delegation process with a reporting system of tasks and objectives, the feeling of loss of control will disappear and the manager will be aware of all the progress in the project.
- **Ability to coordinate and collaborate:** Coordination and collaboration help to avoid work overlaps, align efforts in the right direction, identify problems more quickly, and find the best solutions for them.
- **Strategic planning:** The ability of a leader to be aware of the current state of the company, the human team and the resources available to develop a "route" that allows his/her team to achieve the objectives established for the project.
- **Communication skills:** Without good communication skills it would be difficult to develop the other skills of a leader. Paying attention, being concise or having good control over non-verbal language are some of the keys to improving our communication skills.
- **Empathy:** Empathy is the ability to perceive what another person feels, that is, the ability to be able to put oneself in the shoes of other people. A good leader will be able to modulate and adapt his/her speech depending on the person or people with whom s/he is communicating.
- **Motivation and Inspiration:** A motivated team is not only a team that works to a higher performance but is also happier and helps to attract and retain the best talent.
- **Courage:** Courage is one of the skills of leaders that differentiates them from a manager. Leaders demonstrate courage when they make difficult decisions, when they take responsibility for their mistakes and those of their teams, or when they have to step out of their comfort zone to perform tasks that are beyond their duty.
- **Commitment:** Commitment manifests itself in many ways; commitment to the company not to give up in good times or bad, commitment to the team to lead it effectively, commitment to customers to offer greater value in the product and commitment to oneself to always keep improving.
- **Problem solving:** A leader must also be a decisive person, that is, a person with resources and knowledge to unblock and solve problems. Sometimes, there are



certain blocks that only a leader can solve and that is where the ability to solve problems comes in, allowing the team to continue advancing.

- **Resilience:** Resilience is precisely the ability of people to overcome adverse situations and recover quickly from them. A good leader needs to ensure that adversities do not interfere with his/her team's performance and progress; in difficult situations s/he has to overcome it quickly and continue working.

## 4.2. Resources for implementation

If you wish to become a good virtual team leader, in addition to training the skills mentioned in this unit, you need to efficiently use applications and digital tools that will help you manage and motivate your team, guiding them towards the achievement of all your objectives and goals.

Some basic digital tools for creating a digital work environment are:

- **Online meetings** (Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams, etc.): Video conferencing software and platforms can offer an alternative to face-to-face meetings. Participants in a video conference may find it more attractive compared to a phone call. Participants can also provide visual feedback through a presentation or by sharing the screen. By seeing others in the meeting, workers can feel more connected to their colleagues.
- **Team messaging** (Skype, Google Chat, Slack, etc.): A team messaging platform allows workers to send and receive messages instantly. Through it, workers can share information or data with each other to complete their work.
- **Project and task management** (TeamWork, nTask, Basecamp, Asana, Trello, etc.): Although it may take more time to use them efficiently at first, task and project management tools allow employers and their employees to have visibility into all their projects and tasks.
- **Cloud-based file storage** (Google Drive, Nextcloud, Microsoft OneDrive, etc.): You have two main options to store the digital files that a business uses to work. You can maintain your own server within a network or you can use a cloud-based file storage system.
- **Document collaboration** (Google Docs, Microsoft 365, Zoho WorkDrive, etc.): Many cloud-based storage platforms have built-in collaboration tools. This allows



more than one person to create and work on a document at the same time, often showing changes in real time.

### 4.3. Handouts and activity sheets

#### Activity 1: SITUATION ANALYSIS

A good team leader must learn to face a multitude of situations, which often go wrong. For this it is important to learn from mistakes and be self-critical. In addition, empathy helps you to put yourself in the shoes of others, and recognize their emotions. That will help you solve problems in the future and become a great leader.

#### *Learning objectives:*

- *To improve communication*
- *To learn to solve problems*
- *To practice self-awareness and self-criticism*
- *To develop empathy*

#### *Instructions:*

1. *Complete the columns in the following table from right to left, taking into consideration a problem you have addressed.*
2. *Be honest and allow time to complete the last column.*

What did I say?	How did I say it?	What was I hoping to get?	What effect / emotion did it cause?	What results did I get?	What can I do now?

#### Activity 2: THE OLYMPICS OF PERSONAL PRODUCTIVITY

Investing in training is ideal to achieve effective virtual teams, but it is also true that it is good to spend time and effort in other aspects that enhance productivity and communication within the work team. A productive person is not only one who knows how to manage their projects and tasks, but one who incorporates different skills to optimize work routines both personally and as a team.

#### *Learning objectives:*



- To increase team productivity.
- To improve team effectiveness.
- To promote communication within the team.

*Instructions:*

1. Each person on the team makes a list of different topics that help improve the team's effectiveness.
2. When each person on the team has prepared the list, the next step would be to share it publicly on a digital canvas such as Mural or Miro. The fact of depositing these themes in the aforementioned tools allows us to design a small mental map with specific ideas for each of the themes proposed by the team.

5. Reflection question:

We have seen that there are 6 leader profiles; Which do you think are the barriers of each of them to work in virtual environments?

## 5. Skills for working remotely productively

### 5.1. Necessary skills for working remotely productively

Remote working is becoming part of our daily lives. The Covid-19 pandemic has forced companies to move to a remote working model. They have adapted their mission and service to meet new needs.

Managers and their teams have had to adapt to remote working, and its advantages and disadvantages. Remote working may seem harmless at first glance, but according to empirical evidence it can also have a toll on employees' mental and physical wellbeing. As such in order to gain the most out of remote working it is essential to cultivate some specific skills.

Teleworking has moved the office into the private sphere of employees. They have access to their work at any time via technological tools (computers, tablets...). In addition to the tools needed to manage virtual work, managers of virtual teams need to balance the requirements of remote productivity with the efficiency and



well-being of their teams. To achieve their goals in an online environment, employees rely on many skills necessary to maintain effective productivity.

Productivity is the amount of output per hour of work, in other words, the amount of work completed per hour of work. All companies aim to achieve a good level of productivity to increase their profits. To do so, they look for a certain efficiency in the work of their employees to achieve their objectives.

Limited literature exists on the skills needed for working remotely productively. However, many employment agencies, professional websites, and others are putting forward their vision of working remotely and the skills needed to ensure work productivity.

For example, Ashira Prossack, a life coach and journalist for Forbes newspaper, has compiled a list of "5 Must-Have skills for remote work". She highlights 5 skills employees must have to work effectively remotely: Strong written communication skills, Collaboration, Focus, Time management and Adaptability.

To address this lack of academic research, the Virtual Teams project partners conducted field research to identify the essential skills required by managers, directors, HR professionals, etc. to ensure the productivity of remote work. This research showed disparities between the different countries but also some similarities with many articles available on the internet.

So, what skills are needed to be productive in remote work??

- **Flexibility / Adaptability:** Remote working is interfering with employees' personal lives. They need to be flexible about tasks and deadlines. Personal life takes a different place when working remotely, a place sometimes more significant than before. It is important to be flexible (if possible) in the tasks to be carried out and the associated deadlines. It is also important to take into account that each employee has different personal realities (internet access, digital skills...).
- **Autonomy:** Ability to manage your activity without having to be supervised continuously. This skill is essential to be productive at work, even at a distance. It is essential to give the necessary autonomy to your employees so that they can accomplish their activities on time. It is also a sign of confidence and recognition of their skills and abilities. This recognition is known to increase employee commitment. According to the Gallup Institute, engagement increases productivity by 21% and customer satisfaction by 10%.
- **Self-management:** Ability to control your thoughts, motivations, actions and feelings. Self-management can be composed of several sub-skills such as



self-motivation, or self-confidence. Self-management enables you to set goals to be independent and to take the initiative to achieve them. In several aspects, self-management is similar to autonomy, especially in terms of increasing the commitment of employees. Indeed, by being aware of one's capacities and skills, it is easier to motivate oneself and to commit to the professional tasks to be carried out.

- **Strong communication abilities:** Effective remote working requires adequate communication to ensure good productivity. The implementation of such communication requires that all interlocutors have strong communication abilities. It is well known that working from a distance makes communication less fluid. It is therefore important to cultivate this skill, as it will not only ensure good team cohesion, but will also prevent the isolation of any of the collaborators and, above all, will ensure the productivity and effectiveness of the work requested.
- **Teamworking:** Whether you are an employee or a manager of a team, teamwork skills are essential for working, and even more so when you work remotely. According to the Indeed website, teamwork skills represent the set of qualities and aptitudes enabling you to work as part of a team, i.e., communicating and knowing how to respond, carrying out tasks with others, being responsible, participating in discussions and decision-making, etc.

As the term implies, working at a distance puts distance between members of the same team, between collaborators, etc. Therefore, knowing how to work as a team, even at a distance, allows you to reduce the distance between your colleagues and to avoid losing efficiency and productivity. Moreover, a good manager knows how to set the pace, how to rally the members of his team, and help them work together.

- **Digital skills:** According to UNESCO, digital skills « *are defined as a range of abilities to use digital devices, communication applications, and networks to access and manage information. They enable people to create and share digital content, communicate and collaborate, and solve problems for effective and creative self-fulfillment in life, learning, work, and social activities at large* ». Remote working relies on the use of digital tools for communication, management and task completion. Basic digital skills are essential for teleworking. Therefore, it is essential to ensure your workforce has the necessary digital skills to work efficiently and effectively from a distance.



- **Planning and organisation skills** are “*the ability to identify and set objectives, manage and prioritise your workload and other resources. Monitor performance against objectives, anticipating and putting steps in place to mitigate potential issues/ problems*” according to the University of Leeds.  
To improve team productivity, planning and organising skills enable the efficient management of tasks and activities of employees. It is one of the essential skills for working remotely productively.
- **Time management** is the ability to organise your time, prioritise your tasks, and plan your work. Working time is precious, especially to ensure productivity. Learning to manage time effectively is essential, especially in remote situations, to prevent being overwhelmed by different tasks that might come up at the same time. Time management is one of the essential skills for online work and productivity. Good time management is essential to enable employees to do their work effectively and in a reasonable time.

This list of skills is not exhaustive, but they represent the most essential skills to ensure productivity in remote work for employees but also for managers, head office or HR managers.

## 5.2. Essential tools for remote working Time Management

Many online tools have been developed in recent years to meet the needs of companies and remote work. These are mainly tools that facilitate remote communication, information exchange and time and team management.

Here are some examples of time management tools, used and approved by thousands of people around the world. They allow both the analysis of working time to promote team productivity and the tracking of time in the completion of tasks or activities, etc.

### 5.2.1. Analyze the remote working time



Before implementing a time management tool, an analysis of the use of time spent working online can be interesting. This is not a way to track employees but to understand how they work online.

The analysis of this remote working time allows you to implement the necessary actions to ensure your team's efficiency and productivity and work.

Here are some examples of effective online tools for the analysis of this working time:



**RescueTime**

Rescue time is time management and productivity software. This software measures the way you use your time. This tool allows you to analyze and understand the management of your time to take the necessary actions to optimize your time and productivity.

For example, Rescue Time evaluates the time you spend on different sites and in particular, allows you to block entertainment sites (social networks) that could interfere with your productivity and concentration.

Website: <https://www.rescuetime.com/>



**Time Doctor**

Time doctor is also an accurate time management software. This software analyses in detail the use of time in a working day. It monitors the various websites and applications used during working hours. In addition, it provides an almost real-time view of the employees' work through screenshots taken at a given moment.

This precise analysis permits the adaptation of the working time of its employees to favor quality work and good productivity. The tool also makes it possible to define the necessary break times, especially when working remotely.

Website: <https://www.timedoctor.com/>



### 5.2.2. Manage remote working time

After analyzing the use of remote working time, you can implement the necessary actions to manage the working time of your team.

To do this, you can adopt digital tools to manage working time online using software that tracks the completion of tasks or projects.

**GANTTPRO** Gantt Pro is a digital tool available on any software. It enables you to manage the evolution of a project or a task. Using the Gantt chart methodology, this tool gives you both a global vision of all the tasks to be carried out and the deadlines.

The specificity of this tool is its interactivity, making it possible to see in real-time the evolution of tasks and deadlines. It can be shared, and an entire team's time management can be done. If you have several projects to manage, you can easily find them and follow up on them. Gantt Pro is the most suitable digital tool for team project management.

Website: <https://ganttpro.com/>



### Agenda

Google Agenda is a digital tool belonging to the Google suite. It offers an easy way to manage your schedule and your time. Google Calendar is like a real digital agenda in which you can insert different meetings, tasks, absences, etc. In a team environment, you can easily share your agenda and have access to those of your colleagues.

The advantage of this tool is that you can find your calendar on your smartphone or tablet thanks to the Google Calendar application. Moreover, as part of the Google suite, it allows you to link your calendar to your Drive space, Google Meet (to create and participate in video calls), contacts, Gmail, etc.



Website: <https://calendar.google.com/>



Toggl track is a time tracking software. You can manage your time efficiently and also measure the time you spend on each task/activity/customer. This tool is available online and also on smartphones.

Furthermore, this software is very helpful for managers to track the time needed for their team's activities and to monitor the progress and the time spent by their employees.

Beyond the monitoring by managers or other leaders, it allows employees to manage their time to work efficiently. Toggl collects all time management information for all projects assigned to the employee.

Website: <https://toggl.com/track/>



Trello is a well-known and widely used digital tool for project management. Indeed, it is very complete and lets you create specific spaces for your projects.

You can easily fill in the different tasks of your project, add descriptions, documents and even deadlines. Trello also has a function for highlighting tasks to be completed and for classifying tasks already completed. You can assign tasks to one or more people working on the project.

Trello offers users a customizable experience for planning and managing their time. This tool is widely used in the professional field such as team, project or mission management but also for personal use. Website: <https://trello.com>

### 5.3. Essential tools for remote working productively

Since 2020, many eWork tools have been developed and some have emerged from the pack as they enable quality remote work management. Many professionals have been using these different tools to manage remote work by focusing on team management, time management, the organization of working time, but also the working environment. Indeed, a quality remote working environment will enhance team productivity.

Here are some essential tools for remote working productively:



### 5.3.1. Online working environment

First of all, it is important to create an online working environment that allows teamwork, information exchange and data collection.

#### Google workspace:



Google has developed several tools for collaborative online working. These complementary tools provide an online working environment that supports communication via Gmail and GMeet, the creation (collaborative or not) and sharing of documents via Google Drive, and the organization of work via Google Calendar. The advantage of Google Workspace is the connections between all the applications, making it possible to create a real workspace.

- **Gmail** is a free email service. You can easily send and receive emails. This tool also has a chat facility for instantaneous discussion.
- **GMeet** (Google Meet) is a videoconferencing service for instant video and audio communication with your contacts. GMeet offers the possibility of remote meetings with between 100 and 250 people simultaneously.
- **Google Drive** is a tool that allows file sharing in the Google cloud. Thanks to the tools available (Google Docs, Sheets, Slides, Form...), it is possible to create, modify and share files, tables and presentations between Google Drive users.
- Google Agenda is an online calendar to collect all your meetings and tasks. This application allows you to share events and agendas with other users.



Dropbox is an online workspace designed to facilitate the exchange of information and data. Dropbox permits the storage and sharing of files via a cloud developed by Dropbox. The use of Dropbox is secure and allows access to the Dropbox space created to be limited to a specific audience.

Dropbox <https://www.dropbox.com>



Slack is a project management software. Thanks to the creation of channels specific to each project, Slack creates a common workspace to facilitate the follow-up of tasks and communication between all project actors. This tool promotes remote teamwork and collaborative project coordination.

Slack <https://slack.com/>

### 5.3.2. Organization for remote working

Secondly, it is important to put in place a tool for managing working time (as seen above) and/or organizing work, such as an agenda, task management, etc.



Asana is a widely used tool for managing the projects, work and tasks of a team online. Indeed, thanks to the platform, it is possible to follow the progress of the various tasks of a team and to manage their missions.

The advantage of this tool is the ability to group the work of a team in a shared space and therefore limit any loss of information that may occur during remote work.

On Asana, it is very easy to assign tasks/missions, check the coherence and the work of the team, and optimize each person's performance.

Asana: <https://asana.com/>

- **Time management tools** (seen above 5.1.2.): all the management tools seen above can be useful for work organisation, in particular the Trello and Toggl track tools, which have services complementing time management, by organising and tracking tasks.

### 5.3.3. Remote communication tools

Nowadays, there are many tools for remote communication. The best known is e-mail, which is used to transmit a message to different users via e-mail addresses. The majority of companies and their employees use this communication system, which is effective and has been widely proven.



To this system can be added instant messaging, as the term indicates, consists of the exchange of messages in real-time. This mode of communication is useful for rapid exchanges on a given time point. Instant messaging is widely used in the personal sphere via social networks; however, it is increasingly making its appearance in the professional sphere thanks to communication tools such as WhatsApp, Gmail (seen in sections above) or even Microsoft Teams.

A final communication system widely used and indispensable in remote work is video conferencing. It allows you to see and talk to your interlocutor(s) through digital media. Videoconferencing is very useful for facilitating exchanges and holding meetings with several people at the same time from a distance. There are many video conferencing tools such as Zoom, GMeet, Microsoft Team, Skype...

### WhatsApp



WhatsApp is an instant messaging application. Available on mobile phones, it gives you the opportunity to exchange quickly and easily with the other person. In the business world, this tool is used to exchange easily within the same team. WhatsApp can also be used to make video conference calls, but it's not the best option.

Website: [www.whatsapp.com](http://www.whatsapp.com)

### Microsoft Teams



Microsoft team is a collaborative communication application. Its primary service is video conferencing and instant calling. The application provides the ability to hold remote meetings with multiple participants. Microsoft Teams also has an instant messaging service available online that allows simultaneous exchanges.

Website: <https://www.microsoft.com/fr-fr/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software>

### Zoom



Zoom is a digital tool for video conferencing to hold online meetings with many participants. It has been one of the most widely used programs by companies, universities, schools and



other organisations since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. The tool is simple to use and can be used to create online meetings or courses.

Website: <https://zoom.us/>

Skype <https://www.skype.com/>



Skype is an online communication software for communicating via instant messaging, phone calls and video calls over the internet. It is also possible to communicate in groups and to hold remote meetings. Skype is a widely known and used tool.

This list of tools is not exhaustive. There are many tools available online. It is important to test the tools before adopting them to make the most appropriate choice for your needs and requirements.

## 5.4. Handouts and activity sheets

### Activity 1: Analyze your practices

To be efficient and productive, it is important to analyze the practices of your team. It is essential to inspire your staff to improve their practices and productivity as a manager. Thus, the analysis of the team's practices analysis will enable you to implement the best systems/tools to promote productivity.

#### *Learning outcomes:*

- Reflection on team practices
- Identify priorities and solutions
- Improve productivity and effectiveness
- Develop proper communication and workspace
- Provide necessary tools for team productivity

**Instructions:** Complete the following table with your answers and thoughts.

Questions	Answers	Area for improvements
Communication		



What is the most common form of communication used by your team?		Is this the most appropriate way?  Which digital tool do you use to strengthen communication?
How often does the team communicate with each other? (Daily exchange? meeting?)		Does my team communicate enough?  Is it supportive communication?  Which tool should be used to strengthen communication within the team?
<b>Organisation of work</b>		
Are tasks completed on time?		What are the factors of delay?  How can they be overcome? What tool can be useful for monitoring activity?
How are information/documents exchanged?		Is information being lost? If so, why?  How can these losses be overcome?  Which digital tool is best suited to our practices?
Have I set up an effective remote working environment?		What improvements can I make? What can I put in place to create an effective working space?
<b>Reflection questions</b>		
What can I do to make my team more productive?		
Do I set the tone for my team?		
Am I listening to the material needs (digital tools, etc.) of my team in terms of remote work?		

### 5.5. Reflection question

Putting into practice: You have just carried out an analysis of your team's practices in order to improve its productivity. You realize that your team gets lost in the tasks to be done and does not identify who should do what. So, you decide to use the Asana



tool to create a space to track the tasks assigned to your team. What are the different steps to follow for an efficient introduction of the tool within your team?

## 6. Case studies and best practices

### 6.1. Best practices for keeping remote devices safe and securely protected

Technology has been a huge facilitator, allowing many individuals to work from home during the coronavirus pandemic. Working from home has numerous benefits, but it also necessitates extra caution when it comes to device security. Companies must guarantee that their data is secure and durable outside of the office environment. Some of these best practices may help to do that.

**Protect devices with an anti-virus solution:** To prevent any work documentation being stolen or damaged it is highly vital that you install a reliable security solution on all devices that handle corporate data. If financially this isn't possible you could install a free antivirus, even one at no cost will significantly reduce the risk of malware

**Update programs and operating systems:** new vulnerabilities are being found in application operating systems and cybercriminals are relying on people being too lazy to update their software, with each update your operating system goes through usually it will decrease the chances of being hacked as the vulnerabilities will be patched (A patch is a set of changes to a computer program or its supporting data designed to update, fix, or improve it. This includes fixing security vulnerabilities and other bugs, with such patches usually called bug fixes or bug fixes)

**Configure Wi-Fi encryption:** If a hacker connects to your Wi-Fi protecting the device, then the device and data you're working on will be at risk. Anyone who does this has access to anything you transmit or enter online, including credentials for remote access to a work computer or business mail. As a result, it's critical to properly establish your network connection. If your Wi-Fi asks anyone connecting to it for a password, the connection is encrypted. You have several Wi-Fi encryption standards;



your best bet is WPA2. You can use the router settings to select or change the type of encryption — and remember that your Wi-Fi password should be strong

**Use a VPN if connecting to Wi-Fi networks that don't belong to you:** If using a connection that you don't own such as Wi-Fi in a café that requires no password you should take extra care. Public Wi-fi networks are often not encrypted at all so anyone connected to this network has the possibility of spying on you. This can be prevented by using a Virtual private network (VPN). When you connect to a VPN, regardless of your network settings, all of your data is encrypted, and outsiders are unable to read it.

## 6.2. Best practices for content encryption

Put simply, data encryption is a process that changes data from its original format into a new format. To translate it back, you typically need a special encryption key or code. An algorithm is the name given to the process of encrypting and decrypting data. Several different encryption algorithms have been widely utilized in recent decades and are widely available to all.

**Keep your encryption key secure:** This should be exceedingly obvious, but it can be easy to make mistakes that allow unauthorized parties to access your data. If you leave your encryption key in an unencrypted file on your PC, there is a good chance that someone could find it and cause harm. It's important that you rotate the location of your keys on a schedule.

**Encrypt all sensitive data:** No matter how unlikely you think someone is to find the data it's still important to encrypt it. Lots of big-name companies have been breached simply because they left important data unencrypted and someone gained access to it.

**Assess Encryption performance:** If the process of encrypting your data is taking too long or consuming too much CPU time and memory you should consider switching to a different algorithm or experimenting with the settings of your encryption tools. The CPU (Central Process Unit) is essentially the brain of the computer. It is constantly following instructions of computer programs that tell it which data to process and how to process it. Without a CPU, we could not run programs on a computer. The stronger the CPU the quicker your computer can perform tasks.

### 6.3. Best practices for security from hackers

Working from home is a lifeline for businesses but on the other hand, it provides a chance for people with bad motives to identify flaws in individual behavior as well as weaknesses in an organization's IT infrastructure. By carrying out the task below you can help create a stronger barrier between your work at home and the morally wrong cyber hackers

**Keep Passwords Private:** We tend to use the same password for everything. It's difficult to keep track of multiple passwords, but it's critical for your privacy to use distinct passwords for each account. Make your passwords difficult to decode as well. To ensure optimal security, use capital letters, digits, and characters in your password, and make it at least 10 characters long

**Protect Against Cross-Site Scripting Attack:** Otherwise known as XSS attacks, hackers steal login credentials when users register into websites. Having a robust firewall is the best defense against these forms of attacks.

**Scan All Hard Drives:** Before using an old USB or pen drive, scan it using a USB scanner to see if it contains any malware. Hackers have been known to "drop" USB devices at offices in the hopes that an unsuspecting employee will open them. This can result in the automated installation of hazardous malware on your device.

## 6.4. Resources for implementation

If you wish to play your part in keeping you and your company's data safe from any potential harm it may be useful to use or try some of the following:

**Keeping remote devices safe and securely protected:** There are quite a few antivirus software programs available.

Bitdefender – loads of features, excellent core virus protection, Safepay banking protection and is a superb value for money.

Kaspersky – Fast and configurable virus scans, impressive anti-ransomware capabilities but not a huge number of features.

Norton Antivirus – Highly impressive browsing protection, loads of features and useful bundles backup tool but it has a more performance impact than other options available.

McAfee Antivirus - Bundled VPN with unlimited usage but the anti-virus engine isn't good compared to the others mentioned. One plan can only cover one device.

**Content encryption:** There are a few to choose from depending on the content you want to encrypt.

- **Twofish** - It's a symmetric key block cipher (A block cipher takes a block of plaintext bits and generates a block of ciphertext bits) with a block size of 128 bits, with keys up to 256 bits. It is related to AES (Advanced Encryption Standard)
- **AES** - Advanced Encryption Standards (also known as Rijndael) is one of the most widely used methods for encrypting and decrypting sensitive information in 2020. This encryption method uses what is known as a block cipher algorithm (A block cipher takes a block of plaintext bits and generates a block of ciphertext bits) to ensure that data can be stored securely.
- **RSA** - The RSA algorithm is an asymmetric cryptography algorithm; this means that it uses a public key and a private key (i.e two different, mathematically linked keys)
- **Triple DES** - Triple DES runs three times slower than DES but is much more secure if used properly. The procedure for decrypting something is the same as the procedure for encryption, except it is executed in reverse



***Security from hackers:***

*Use a firewall* - Windows and macOS have built-in firewalls – software designed to create a barrier between your information and the outside world. Firewalls prevent unauthorized access to your business network and alert you to any intrusion attempts.

*Use two factor authentication* - passwords are the first line of defense against computer hackers but adding a second layer of protection increases security. Many websites allow you to set two-factor authentication, which increases security by requiring you to log in with both your password and a number code given to your phone or email address.

## 6.5. Handouts and activity sheets

### Activity 1: Choosing your Antivirus Package

Type Of Antivirus	Pros	Cons
Bitdefender Plus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhanced ransomware protection</li> <li>Banking Protection</li> <li>Outstanding in web protection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unlimited VPN requires a subscription</li> </ul>
Norton Plus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Password Manager</li> <li>Extra firewall protection</li> <li>Data protector foils ransomware attacks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No Multi-license pricing</li> <li>Expensive</li> </ul>
Kaspersky	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Full scale phone and live chat support</li> <li>Good ransomware protection</li> <li>Bonus scans for privacy and performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scans offer very little information back</li> <li>Scans often overlap each other</li> </ul>
McAfee Plus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Excellent detection of fraudulent websites</li> <li>Robust firewall</li> <li>Good Malware protection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Doesn't work the best with MAC/IOS</li> <li>PC boost only works on Chrome</li> <li>Poor lab results</li> </ul>

By using the best practices and information above choose what Antivirus package is best for you and your e-Workers

### Activity 2: Build the strongest Password

By carrying out these specific steps it will keep you and your data more secure than before.

**Make it long.** This is the most critical factor. Choose nothing shorter than 10 characters, more if possible.

**Use a mix of characters.** The more you mix up letters (upper-case and lower-case), numbers, and symbols, the more potent your password is, and the harder it is for a brute force attack to crack it.

**Don't use memorable keyboard paths:** Patterns like 'qwerty' or '12345' are among the first to be guessed by cyber hackers.

The methods below give you some good password ideas to create your own strong, memorable passwords.

**The Revised passphrase method:** Choose bizarre and uncommon words. You can use proper nouns, the names of local businesses or historical figures.

*ParisTurkeyMerciBono*

The hacker may guess Paris but would find it very challenging to guess a good password like the one above. To make it even more complicated you could add random characters in the middle of your words.

**The sentence method:** The idea of this method is to think of a random sentence and transform it into a password using a rule for example taking the first two letters of each word. "The High Stool is my Favorite Pub in Ireland"

*ThHiStIsMyFaPuInIr*

Carry out the following examples above and create your own password. When finished, why not test it with family friends, see if they can guess it. Once you're happy with your password it may be worth searching for a password manager online that you can store all your passwords in incase you forget any because let's remember it's not recommended to use the same password for everything.

## 7. Checklist

Virtual Teams Readiness Checklist							
ITEM TITLE	DESCRIPTION	From 1 to 5:					
		Not at all – Slightly – Moderately – Very much – Extremely					
		1	2	3	4	5	N/A
<b>Introduction to teleworking</b>							
The need of teleworking	How important is the further infusion of teleworking in your organization right now?						
Basic infrastructure for efficient teleworking	How well is the basic infrastructure of your organization right now?						
Available tools for teleworking	To what degree does your organization need more suitable tools for teleworking?						
<b>Necessary equipment for teleworking</b>							
Necessary equipment for effective remote working	To what degree does your organization provide sufficient equipment for teleworking?						



Necessary equipment for effective remotely project management	To what degree does your organization provide sufficient equipment for effective remotely project management?						
Essential tools for communication and collaboration	To what degree do the tools you use in your organization for communication and collaboration are satisfactory?						
Essential tools for design and development	To what degree do the tools you use in your organization for design and development are satisfactory?						
Essential tools for writing and editing	To what degree do the tools you use in your organization for writing and editing are satisfactory?						
Necessary equipment for teleworking and training infrastructure	To what degree does your organization provide sufficient equipment for teleworking and training infrastructure?						
<b>Skills of effective team leaders</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Necessary skills for effective virtual team leaders	To what degree does your organization promote/ provide support and training on the growth of the necessary skills for effective virtual team leaders?						
<b>Skills for working remotely productively</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Necessary skills for working remotely productively	To what degree your organization promotes/ provides support and training on the growth of skills for working remotely productively?						



Essential tools for remote working Time Management	To what degree do the tools you use in your organization for remote working Time Management are satisfactory?						
Essential tools for remote working productively	To what degree do the tools you use in your organization for remote working productively are satisfactory?						
<b>Case studies and best practices</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Best practices for keeping remote devices safe and securely protected	To what degree does your organization implement the best practices for keeping remote devices safe and securely protected?						
Best practices for content encryption	To what degree does your organization implement the best practices for content encryption?						
Best practices on security from hackers	To what degree does your organization implement the best practices for security from hackers?						

## 8. Conclusions

The Virtual Teams Toolkit was created through field research (online questionnaire survey and a focus group) implemented in each partner's country. Through the analysis of the results each partner created a national report about the challenges and difficulties along with best practices that HR Managers, Team Leaders and Managers utilize in order to work effectively and productively remotely. The results are reported in the beginning section of the toolkit "Field Research Findings".

Based on the aforementioned results the Virtual Teams partners have composed the current toolkit to provide current and practical information about the teleworking environment, the necessary equipment, skills for effective team leadership, working remotely productively along with best practices and case studies.

Teleworking is a broad term which includes all the forms of working outside of the office. Currently the term "teleworking" is most often describing remote working due to the shift of the workplace conditions caused by the pandemic. Thus, going back to basics and mapping the necessary equipment for teleworking and the infrastructure for efficient teleworking were considered essential and were added in the toolkit.

The rise in teleworking has also raised the necessity to find new ways of working. An extensive list of the available tools for teleworking such as communication tools, design and development tools, writing and editing tools were added in the toolkit.

Another area with a major shift was the role of team leaders, managers, HR professionals in supporting their team members and employers. To address this through the toolkit, a section about effective team leadership in remote working was added with the most important characteristic being flexibility and adaptability in the new working era.

Aligned with this, the toolkit intends to be utilized as a dynamic tool, aiming for its users to be able to gain information and apply fast and efficiently appropriate tools and processes for their organizations. For this purpose, the partners have created a checklist containing a reflective scope of each module, along with assessment tools and handout materials after the completion of each chapter.

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