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Rethinking Work: Exploring New Working Models in the Age of Digitization

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Summary

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, flexible working arrangements have reshaped global workforce performance, with employees prioritizing work environment satisfaction over employer preferences. To maintain productivity, boost retention, and explore new avenues of efficiency, this paper examines the shift in employment models and the rising popularity of the four-day workweek.

Key Takeaways

- Private and government-funded pilot programs are testing the four-day workweek model to boost performance.
- Globally, remote and hybrid working models have become permanent in certain sectors, benefiting business operations but revealing limitations in other industries.
- Investing in high-speed digital technology will increase national productivity and align with the EU 2030 Digital Technology Agenda.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly altered working norms, accelerating the adoption of remote and hybrid work models. Flexible working conditions have shifted employee preferences and long-term productivity practices globally. Supplementing new working models, the growing trend of digitization, and the EU's 2030 Digital Technology Initiative are further enhancing investments in digital capital and driving the adoption of new working practices. The push for remote work and shorter workweeks, such as four-day trials, is reshaping long-term sustainability practices. This report examines the global shifts in new employment models, highlighting the benefits and limitations of sectoral differences, government regulation, and the long-term sustainability of these changes.

Digitization and Flexible Work Models

Digital technology and the drive for proficiency are key drivers of workplace flexibility. The European Union's 2030 Digital Technology Initiative illustrates this by targeting higher tech proficiency and modern work models. Reports indicate substantial compatibility with remote work in Europe and the U.S., as 31% of Europeans and 37% of U.S. citizens are compatible with remote work (KPMG, 2022). Generation Z and Millennials have the largest percentage of hybrid workers, and consistently advocate for flexible employment models (KPMG, 2022; WFH, 2025). In the Czech Republic, reintegrating younger employees into full in-person roles is difficult, making preferences central to retention (JOSRA, 2024; Perez, 2025; Storm, 2025).

Remote and Hybrid: Benefits and Limitations

Incorporating a remote option statistically improves overall performance. In the United States, 32.6 million Americans have a remote option, accounting for around 22% of the global workforce, and this represents an increase from 7.9% pre-pandemic (Kumar, 2025). Globally, 83% of workers prefer hybrid models to have more work-life balance and around 19.5% of employees work remotely at least part-time (Kumar, 2025). Additionally, remote work is most common among 35–44-year-olds (27.4%), who often balance careers with family responsibilities (Kumar, 2025).

In the Czech Republic, 60% of employees favored a remote option in their schedule (JOSRA, 2024). JOSRA notes that remote work reduces commuting time, boosting efficiency and work-life balance (JOSRA, 2024).

Another positive aspect is that remote work expands access to talent, removing geographic barriers. The World Economic Forum estimates that remote work could add \$2.6 trillion to global GDP by 2030 due to increased labor participation, as well as investments in technology that support new working models (Kumar, 2025).

While new working conditions will improve global productivity, flexible conditions are only effective in the business and technology sectors. During the height of the pandemic, only the United States business sectors experienced a peak in production, while service sectors such as food services experienced a loss. The service sector largely benefits from an in-person model, as the loss of foot traffic during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic affected their demand (Levin, 2025). In addition, remote options in the United States may lead to lower wages, as the United States Congress noted a correlation between lower-performing employees increasingly opting for a total remote-working option (Levin, 2025).

In the Czech Republic, concerns have arisen over blurred working environments and potential burnout, as 30% of remote workers report working during free time multiple times a week, compared to just 5% of their office-based peers (JOSRA, 2024).

Adequate governmental support is essential for organizations to fully capitalize on the potential of remote work. Many organizations lack the resources to meet remote work compliance requirements (KPMG, 2022).

The Four-Day Workweek and the 100-80-100 Model

Another working arrangement gaining popularity is the four-day workweek, with many organizations also implementing the “100-80-100” Model (100% pay, 80% time, 100% productivity), aiming to bolster efficiency. Recent pilot trials have shown strong results, with a UK pilot in 2022 finding that 92% of 60+ participating firms wanted to maintain the four-day week, citing improved mental health, reduced burnout, and stable or improved results (Greece, 2025; Storm, 2025). More specifically, 71% of employees reported reduced levels of burnout and 37% increase in physical health (Storm, 2025). Currently, 18% of the employers have created permanent changes to their organizations.

Additionally, in Iceland, public sector trials from 2015 to 2019 reduced working hours without cutting pay and yielded sustained GDP growth (Grecek, 2025). In 2022, over 51% of the workforce transitioned to a short workweek, with improved work structures, sustained performance, and employee satisfaction. Iceland’s success stems from government investment in high-speed tech, including rural areas, enabling connectivity and work delivery (Perez, 2025). In addition, Iceland scores exceptionally high on the happiness index, with research suggesting a correlation between citizens’ well-being and the short workweek (Verma, 2025).

Comparative Global Approaches

Some countries have implemented a shorter workweek through policy. Belgium’s 2022 Labor Deal legalized a four-day working option, yet the general public lacks interest (with only 1.9% of its citizens switching to the four-day model) because the policy condenses working hours into four days rather than focusing on reducing working hours (Verslype, 2025). Belgium aimed to boost labor participation, but long working hours proved challenging.

Poland recently launched a 15-18-month trial focused on reducing working hours, aiming to align with the EU average (Dohnal, 2025). The government began implementing the pilot among public city hall employees, and it gradually spread to private city companies. Now, several thousand people are working 35-hour work weeks, focusing on proficiency (Dohnal, 2025).

Czech companies like Sherpas have used a four-day week since 2019, attracting talent and maintaining production (GPA, 2023). Similarly, Czech economist Vladimír Vaňo argues that organizations are more diligent with their time, as studies suggest that a four-day workweek model enhances employee mental health and enables them to work more effectively during their working hours (English Radio, 2024). In the U.S., pilot programs led by 4DayWeekGlobal reported an 8% revenue increase and strong employee satisfaction, with 70% unwilling to return to five-day schedules without a 10–15% pay raise (McParlane, 2025). Despite these positive indicators in both the Czech Republic and the United States, only private initiatives for a shorter workweek have emerged within companies that can afford a pilot program, thereby limiting accessibility to new working conditions.

Recommendations

- As the Czech Parliament has an Innovation Strategy 2019-2030, the Ministry of Industry and Trade should invest in digital infrastructure (similar to Iceland) and training to ensure all regions and sectors can support remote and hybrid work models, further aligning with EU initiatives.
- The Ministry of Labor could fund a four-day workweek pilot among public employees, similar to Poland's 100-80-100 model, to assess long-term benefits of reduced hours.
- Czech Municipalities should establish clear legal frameworks for flexible work, including the right to disconnect, remote work standards, and shorter workweek support, drawing on Sherpas' policies as a model.

Conclusion

The introduction of flexible workplace systems have begun to alter long-term sustainable practices in many economic sectors. Remote options attract diverse talent and improve balance, but sectoral gaps and tech compliance remain barriers. In turn, the four-day workweek model, particularly the 100-80-100 practice, proves to be promising for future sustainability. Policymakers should evaluate and collect data on the influence of new working models to better assess new legal frameworks and support for digital investments and funding of pilot projects.

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