San José Declaration: State Modernisation – Telework in the Knowledge Society

The 17th International ITA Workshop "Telework 2012" took place during four days in San José, the capital of Costa Rica, under the subject "State Modernisation: Telework in the Knowledge Society", gathering experts from seven countries including government officials, university lecturers and representatives of civil society. Telework 2012 issued the San José Declaration on Telework, in which the main conclusions of the event are documented in order help to develop telework in the context of state modernisation, promotion of decent work in the region and employment opportunities for all.

Taking into consideration the exchange of opinions during the Workshop, and

CONSIDERING THAT

1 – Telework as a work arrangement has increasingly become common practice, and as such it needs to be better reflected in formal education;

2 – The huge changes in digital technology provide a growing range of opportunities for telework;

3 – Digital technologies form a transversal axis to the modernisation of the state

4 – The ongoing globalisation trend requires the use of telework for achieving more efficiency and provision of a wider range of employment options;

5 – Telework favours inclusion of vulnerable groups in the labour market;

6 – Teleworking can contribute powerfully to the protection of the natural environment;

7 – Telework favours the development of a culture adapted to the needs of the knowledge society;

The workshop agreed to propose the following recommendations to social agencies, governmental and international organisations:

ON THE ROLE OF TELEWORK FOR STATE MODERNISATION

[1] Incorporate telework in strategies for National Development and State Modernisation

Telework acts as a catalyst for modernisation; for this reason, it should be incorporated within the countries strategies for National Development and State Modernisation in order to contribute to national efforts to build a more inclusive society, aligned to national policies and international initiatives aimed at improving quality processes, employability, the democratization of technology, increased productivity and efficiency to the benefit of all citizens.

In this manner, a guiding strategic framework needs to be established in order to enable a

countries/governments to set the parameters under which state institutions can start implementing telework.

[2] Incorporate telework in the strategic planning of organizations

Implementation of telework is a practice that has a range of implications across the different sectors of an organisation; for this reason telework needs to be fully reflected in the organizations' strategic decision-making and planning processes.

[3] Develop initiatives to modernise legislation with a focus on telecommuting

In order to consolidate telecommuting it is essential to determine appropriate governance models/ a steering committee, to adapt legislation, define new public policies ensuring diversity, equity and inclusion, with the aim of establishing telework as an adequate way of working that addresses legitimate and growing needs of society.

To ensure enforcement of policies and legislation it will be necessary to design proper Initiatives and actions for awareness promotion and adequate training, with a view to facilitating cultural change and ensuring widespread ownership of telework as a tool for modernisation at all levels, seeking the financial, technical, technological and other types of support necessary for that purpose.

[4] Standardise criteria for planning, coordinating and monitoring implementation of telework and related initiatives

Institutions that aim to support the vision and practice of telework in society need to clusterize, forming a network with private, public, national and international stakeholders for shared planning, coordination and monitoring of activities in support of effective implementation of telework.

It is necessary to promote social dialogue and to engage key institutions in dedicated efforts and development programs based on a systemic understanding of the role of telework in state modernisation.

ON THE ROLE OF EDUCATION FOR ESTABLISHING TELEWORKING

[1] Update formal education programs to foster a culture of innovation and implementation of telework

Because management of knowledge is a process that needs to be adapted to the needs and demands of an environment in constant change, formal education programs should be updated to foster a culture of innovation by encouraging the development of skills that support employability and competitiveness through telework.

In the context of state modernisation, public policy therefore needs to constantly review processes and

methods of education.

[2] Design and provide training programs for citizens with a view to closing the knowledge gap and promoting acquisition of skills required for telecommuting

In a knowledge-based society, interaction through virtual media is a growing trend, which makes it necessary to constantly review university curricula and to adapt them in order to prepare students for telecommuting careers, increase professional performance and improve overall employability.

Any person getting involvekd with telework should have a skilled profile that includes specific job skills such as the capability to work efficiently with everyone, anywhere and at any time; formal recognition of these skills would prepare the ground for greater labour market participation.

[3] Include telework training in entrepreneurship programs in order to open new possibilities for successful self-employment

Support to SMEs, MSMEs (small and medium-sized [micro] enterprises) and entrepreneurship in general should include measures for empowering more citizens in a business development perspective. Within this context it is vital to include telework training in entrepreneurial programs, with a view to enhancing the employability of different population groups and thus improve competitiveness and local development.

[4] Train entrepreneurs as well as middle and high-level officers in the public sector in telework implementation

In order to boost productivity, increase efficiency, cut costs and realise a range of other benefits, telework needs to overcome any resistance to change. For this purpose, training in telework implementation needs to be provided to entrepreneurs as well as middle and high-level managers in the public sector.

ON THE ROLE OF THE INFORMATION SOCIETY IN SOCIAL INCLUSION

[1] Develop programs for labour force inclusion through teleworking, targeting vulnerable groups of the population

Countries seek to promote a fair and equitable society that provides equal opportunities to all. Teleworking contributes directly to employability and employment of vulnerable sectors of the population (such as the elderly, people with disabilities, the young, inexperienced workers, people in peripheral or hard-to-reach regions, etc.) by getting rid of discrimination in access to decent work.

There are two sides to labour market inclusion via telework: the first refers to the group of employees that are eligible for telework which should have no restrictions of race, age, gender, disability,

geographic location or any other criterion to be considered. The second side refers to inclusion in telework programs of organizations, and both in the public or private sectors there is a need to ensure that 100% of all stakeholders are considered in the process involving application, evaluation and selection of candidates for telework implementation.

[2] – Engage in national and international cooperation to promote employment through telework

One of the major challenges for governments is to find adequate responses to the need to reduce unemployment and poverty, especially among certain parts of the population. Against this background telework can play a role in enabling national and international cooperation for creation of employment through partnerships and strategic alliances with business chambers and other institutions that tend to facilitate employment and entrepreneurship.

The use of telework at international (cross-border) level helps to raise productivity through increased specialization; it allows, without the need for countries to enter into competition for scarce resources, types of collaboration that result in the possibility of increasing global levels of production, thereby generating new sources of employment .

[3] Promote telework through compliance with international agreements on employment, social inclusion and use of Its

There is a number of international agreements and treaties that address actions and commitments of countries to specific lines of social development. In this context, telework should be promoted – wherever possible – through implementation of international agreements on labour, social inclusion and use of ICTs.

[4] Guide States in the use of ICTs for promotion of labour market inclusion, including by means of teleworking

Countries should strive to ensure that their population has full access to the technology and connectivity required for implementation of telework.

For the creation of decent jobs and and inclusive working conditions, optimising the use of time and other resources, it is vital that people make best use of ICT. Provision of training is of essential value in this context. It is necessary to focus efforts on counselling and training in the use of ICTs to promote a modern and inclusive labour market, including by means of teleworking.

ON INNOVATION, TELEWORK, AND PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

[1] Join up telework programs with strategies for the "Digital City"

Promoting the concept of the digital city, making full use of telecommuting, can be seen as a way to

democratise access to education, employment and public services. This requires that citizens can avail of free Internet access points throughout the city, and that these are made known.

Democratisation of access by means of ICT can contribute powerfully to more modern and inclusive societies; for this reason, integration of digital city strategies with telecommuting programs can help spread effective use of telework within an enlarged perspective.

[2] Explore the use of telework for reducing our carbon footprint

It becomes increasingly imperative that ways are found to reduce energy consumption and to cut back emissions of greenhouse gases, environmental pollutants (including noise pollution) and to reduce their negative impacts on people's health. To this end, actions should be taken to measure the contribution that telecommuting can make to reduction of our carbon footprint.

As a start, studies should be designed that quantify the impact of teleworking on costs and benefits on both the company's and the employee's side, with a view to generating robust evidence about the impact of teleworking in terms of social, economic and ecological sustainability.

[3] Promote paperless organisations and other measures to facilitate implementation of teleworking

The widespread paper-based working culture in organisations, in addition to promoting bureaucracy has a dramatic impact on the environment. Promotion of telework, based on intensive use of digital technologies, can act as a push for organisations to establish the "paperless office", leading to considerable saving in resource consumption.

Other initiatives that are of relevance in this context include take-up of the digital signature, which often goes hand-in-hand with introduction of streamlined business processes and which greatly facilitates telework.

[4] Offer incentives to organisations that reduce their environmental impact through application of telecommuting

Reduction of the environmental impact of office work is one of the accepted benefits of telework. It is recommended to establish incentive structures which stimulate and encourage organisations to reduce their environmental impact through implementation of telework, complemented by implementation of unified communications and video-conferencing.

It should be seen as a shared responsibility to establish telework in ways which are cost-effective, environmentally viable, and socially just.

[5] Form alliances between all stakeholders concerned to foster telecommuting

It is necessary to form partnerships between national and international organisations dedicated to research, innovation and the creation of new paradigms on telework, making use of carefully structured international networks, in order to agree on actions to fully establish teleworking as a regular practice in organisations and society at large.

Signed in San José, Costa Rica on 31 August, 2012

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