

EDITORIAL

Smart and Distance Working... Pandemic and beyond!

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In the McKinsey's report: "The The future of work after COVID-19", back in 2021, it was stressed that "*before COVID-19, the largest disruptions to work involved new technologies and growing trade links. COVID-19 has, for the first time, elevated the importance of the physical dimension of work*". For sure, the Covid-19 pandemic has not only disrupted labor markets globally in a complete different way, during 2020, but it has changed the working place forever, not only is certain work arenas, but everywhere.

The COVID-19 pandemic has definitely led to a step change in the new role and dominance of remote working, across many businesses and employers. Along with revolutionary changes and adaptations, the pandemic has also accelerated, to an unprecedented pace, the digital race and transformation, where numerous businesses throughout the world just turned to digital technology to continue their operations, with staff working from home remotely and using various tools (videoconferencing, cloud services and virtual private networks).

Following the Covid-19 pandemic and the abrupt switch towards working-from-home reality, professionals and office employees, in particular, have been faced with sudden challenges in their work, spanning from lack of technical equipment and skills, and adaptability with the new normal, along with health issues. Such reality revealed a number of jobs, professions and operations to be easily formatted within it, as well as many tasks found to be only partially suitable, or unable to be performed from home. The simple truth is that not all jobs can be switched into a remote regime. Indeed, as the global experience shows, only a minority of jobs can be done from home. Despite this, an existential question hangs over everyone's head: Is this increase in tele and remote working only temporary or will it last in

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the future? The answer, in the long term, will basically depend on the final balance between the pros and cons of remote working for both workers and businesses.

Smart and remote working presents the most complex challenge for business organizations, their HR departments and their business strategies in the future. The post-pandemic world, along with globalization and the Fourth Industrial Revolution represent the most complicated jigsaw the business world, labor markets and employees are bound to solve, and the most viable solution will unavoidably ask for extensive research and studies, which will further explore and unfurl new issues and challenges, as well as produce innovative ideas and solutions for increasing the work productivity and ameliorate leadership challenges, business environment, organization of work, the practices of HR management, and above all, the social balance. Businesses and workers need to keep working, leading, cooperating and innovating, as Albert Einstein once said: *“Life is like riding a bicycle, to keep your balance, you must keep moving!”*