

## ABSTRACT

### The use of remote work in South Tyrolean firms

**Remote work is a form of flexible work that has been known for a long time. Nevertheless, its spread among South Tyrolean firms was rather limited until a few years ago. This changed during the Covid-19 pandemic as the lockdown forced many firms to have their employees working from home. This report analyses how widespread and common remote work is among South Tyrolean businesses, as well as their experience with it.**

The first Covid-19 wave in March 2020 led to the sudden rise of remote work among South Tyrolean businesses. Since working in the office was only allowed in certain "system-relevant" sectors, many firms let their employees work from home to carry on with their business. However, this was only possible for firms with office-based activities. Among South Tyrolean businesses with employees, the spread of remote work increased from 3% before the pandemic to about 27%.

Once the state of emergency ended, the use of remote work decreased again, but one in ten firms, i.e. about 1,700 businesses, and 11,600 employees still rely on it. Most of these businesses would like to allow working from home in the future as well.

In terms of sectors, remote work is used above average in the service sector (26% of firms), in agricultural cooperatives (23%), in the environment and energy sector (22%) and in wholesale trade (16%). The manufacturing sector (9%) ranks just below the average. At the bottom of the ranking are retail trade,

construction, tourism (4% each) and sale and repair of vehicles (1%).

In most firms where remote work is implemented, employees use it once or twice a week. In approximately one third of cases, employees work from home on the same days and with the same working hours as colleagues working in the office. Around two-thirds of the firms enable more flexible arrangements, giving the employees better freedom regarding the choice of time and place of work.

About half of the firms assess their experience with remote work neutrally, meaning a neither positive nor negative opinion. On the other hand, among those businesses that do not report a neutral evaluation, the positive reviews outnumber the negative ones. With regard to specific aspects of the remote work, the most positive assessment concerns "access to software, data and information needed by employees working from home". Other relevant aspects, such as "productivity, motivation and discipline of employees" and "organisation and coordination of employees", are evaluated mostly positively, but there are also some negative comments. "Communication with employees working from home" is rated somewhat more critically. The most negative assessment refers to the effects of working from home on "team spirit and employees' sense of belonging to the firm".

Furthermore, the results show that companies which implemented remote work only during the pandemic gave more negative evaluations than those that still use it afterwards. The

greatest difference in ratings concerns the communication with employees and the productivity, motivation and discipline of the staff working from home.