

Date: 11 September 2020

To: All staff of the Region

**Administrative Circular:** 2020/007

## **Subject: Update on interim teleworking arrangements in EURO**

Dear Colleagues

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, we continue to operate in special circumstances, as recognized in the HQ updated guidance on [HR measures during COVID-19](#). The measures described in the linked document which affect global entitlements (annual leave, home leave, statutory travel) apply to EURO staff. Measures concerning teleworking are region-specific, and the purpose of this circular is to describe the updated interim measures concerning teleworking which will now apply across the EURO Region.

### **1. Teleworking under quarantine/self-isolation in connection with travel**

#### Private travel

Staff are encouraged to arrange their private travels in such a way that travel restrictions (including requirements to self-isolate) are avoided. When that is not possible and staff are required to quarantine/self-isolate on arrival at destination and/or upon return to the duty station, staff and supervisors may explore the viability of teleworking arrangements, depending on the exigencies of the work to be performed, for all or part of the quarantine/self-isolation period, including in combination with annual leave. Please also refer to section 3 below concerning maximum limit for teleworking periods away from the duty station.

#### Duty travel

The general suspension of duty travel continues to apply until further notice, with exceptions being made for travel in response to the current COVID-19 outbreak (including outbreak *preparedness* activities), travel undertaken in response to another graded emergency, and travel decided on by senior management in response to other priorities. Decisions concerning any such duty travel must be taken with reference to the latest travel advice and regulations issued by relevant national authorities in the duty station, in the travel destination country and in any transit countries involved. The risk of exposure and the risk of mandatory quarantine/self-isolation upon arrival or upon return must be carefully assessed with due consideration that national health authorities' travel advice and regulations are changing frequently. Should quarantine/self-isolation become necessary in connection with an approved duty travel, the staff member may telework during the quarantine/self-isolation period. Any periods of required quarantine/self-isolation at the duty travel destination will be considered part of the duty travel, and the dates must be included in the travel request.

## **2. Teleworking at the duty station**

To the extent possible in the relevant duty station, staff members should return to work at WHO premises. It is recognized that during this uncertain period, there are three main work arrangements where daily presence in WHO offices is not possible:

- Where return to premises is not possible in the location, staff members will remain on general teleworking arrangements.
- Where interim measures for gradual or staggered return to work are in place, guidance from senior management in each location should be followed closely<sup>1</sup>.
- Where a staff member is asked to return to the office but has underlying health conditions or lives with family members who belong to one of the special risk groups, the staff member and supervisor should explore the possibility of continued teleworking arrangements. This also applies for staff members with young children whose schools/day care arrangements are limited or closed due to the COVID-19 situation in the area. Supervisors should look upon such cases favourably and discuss with Director, BOS or Regional HR Manager for any needed clarifications.

Additionally, in situations where a staff member or any of his/her household members have any symptoms associated with COVID-19 or have been exposed through contacts, the staff member should telework for the time required by local authority or UN/WHO office guidance.

## **3. Teleworking outside the duty station**

EURO aligns with the instructions [issued for WHO staff at headquarters](#), which means that existing arrangements for exceptional teleworking outside the duty station are to be concluded by 1 October 2020, and staff should return to their duty station accordingly. It should be noted that extended teleworking outside of duty stations may impact on entitlements and conditions of employment as well as privileges and immunities which are linked to the presence of staff in their assigned duty stations.

In alignment with WHO headquarters, occasional teleworking outside the duty station, up to four days per calendar month, may be approved, following a careful assessment of the risks involved (including, but not limited to, travel restrictions which may be imposed and prevent the planned return to work at the duty station). Requests must be submitted in writing to the first level supervisor<sup>2</sup> and should indicate the date(s) and the location.

Exceptions to the above will be reviewed according to criteria set by HQ, and should be submitted to Director, Business Operations (through the relevant Divisional Director or Head of Office or Head of Country Office).

---

<sup>1</sup> An example is the [email to Copenhagen-based staff from Director Business Operations, 9 September 2020](#).

#### **4. General notes**

When reviewing teleworking arrangements, in order to ensure proper team functioning, supervisors should operate under the general guidance from the relevant Divisional Director, Head of Office or Head of Country Office (and also in consultation with the relevant teams, unit head/programme manager, where applicable). HR colleagues and Director Business Operations can advise as required.

Staff members are reminded that they must keep their Leave Administrator informed of all approved teleworking arrangements and ensure that all travels outside the duty station are entered in the [TRIP security system](#).

The above provisional measures apply until further notice.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'David Allen', with a stylized, overlapping loop structure.

David Allen  
Director  
Business Operations