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LEGAL AND ETHICAL FRAMEWORKS FOR WORKING OUTSIDE THE EMPLOYER'S PREMISES IN SERBIA

The legal framework in Serbia is still not fully adapted to the specific characteristics of work performed outside traditional office environments, which creates challenges in several areas that have long been widely recognized, both in academic discourse and within the business community, such as the regulation of working hours and rest periods, the protection of privacy, and occupational health and safety.

The ethical dimension of remote and home-based work presupposes a relationship of trust between employers and employees, as well as clear yet flexible policies that safeguard the rights and legitimate interests of both parties. By introducing adequate regulation and by actively responding to and understanding emerging trends, Serbia has the potential to successfully integrate this model of work and enhance the well-being of its working-age population, which continues to represent the primary driving force of any contemporary economy up to date.

This paper offers both a theoretical and practical examination of the existing legal framework governing digital work performed outside the employer's premises, viewed from the perspectives of employers and employees alike, as well as the ethical considerations—that is, the implications for the well-being and prosperity of all stakeholders involved in this form of work.

Keywords: remote work, home-based work, working hours, work breaks, privacy.

1. LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AND ETHICAL DIMENSIONS OF WORK OUTSIDE THE EMPLOYER'S PREMISES IN SERBIA

1.1. Introduction

In contemporary society, remote work and work-from-home arrangements have been practiced by business entities since the 1980s. However, the legal construct of work performed outside the employer's premises emerged within the domestic labour law framework only during the 1990s. In the legislation of that period, this institute was primarily regulated in relation to

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agricultural households and certain professions, including computer-based work. Nonetheless, its provisions remained underdeveloped and vague until the extensive amendments to the labour law enacted in 2014 (Employment act, 2014). Significantly, an article bearing this designation was incorporated into the Law on Occupational Safety and Health only in 2023 (Law on Occupational Safety and Health, 2023, Art. 44 and 45).

A decade later, this legal institute remains insufficiently defined, leaving ample room for interpretative discretion by both employers and employees – typically, to the detriment of the latter. It is beyond dispute that the right to perform work outside the employer's premises constitutes a recognized legal entitlement; however, it is equally clear that no right exists without corresponding obligations. Despite these ambiguities, this form of employment, over the course of its now mature existence, has succeeded – amidst a world of entrenched legal and organizational dogmas – in positioning itself simultaneously as a privilege for employees and a competitive advantage for employers.

As a foundational concept, it has also contributed to the development of the so-called hybrid work model, which, according to both statistical data and prevailing labour market trends, ranks as the most attractive arrangement for the contemporary workforce. The hybrid model combines remote work and work performed within the employer's premises, offering flexibility while preserving organizational cohesion. From a formal legal perspective, this arrangement serves not only as a mechanism for engaging but also for attracting a skilled and diverse labour force to perform tasks that contribute to the legitimate purpose of corporate existence – the generation of profit.

According to data collected and published by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia in March 2024, during the year, a total of 219,100 employed persons in the Republic of Serbia worked from home, representing approximately ten percent of the total employed population (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2025). These figures underscore the growing relevance of remote and hybrid work in the domestic labour market, as well as the urgent need for further normative clarification and alignment with contemporary European labour standards.

There exists a wide range of factors that justify and necessitate the introduction and application of this institution – From global circumstances such as the accelerated movement of capital and labour, and the increasing interconnection of world economies (now a supranational category), to global migration trends triggered by crises, wars, climate change, and pandemics.

Starting from the above, the structure of this paper is designed in such a way that, following the introductory section in which the problem is defined, and the theoretical framework is established, a general overview of the normative regulation of work outside the employer's premises in the Republic of Serbia is presented. This is followed by a presentation of empirical data and research findings, while the final part of the paper focuses on a critical assessment of existing solutions and proposes measures for improving both the legal and practical framework.

The main hypothesis of this paper is that the existing legal regulation of work outside the employer's premises in Serbia does not provide a sufficient level of legal certainty for either employers or employees, but instead leaves room for varying interpretations which, in practice, often operate to the detriment of employees. The methodological approach includes the analysis of positive law, as well as a review of relevant statistics, empirical studies, and practical experiences, accompanied by the interpretation of data and official positions of competent authorities, along with available international sources.

This paper also employs a survey as one of the research methods. The sample consists of respondents selected based on accessibility and relevance to the research topic. While this approach provides valuable insights into remote work practices, it is important to note that the sample is not fully representative of the broader Serbian labour market. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted with caution, particularly when considering generalizations at the national or international level. The limitations of the sample, including its size and scope, are acknowledged and taken into account in the analysis and discussion of results.

1.2. Legal and Ethical Framework

Upon closer examination of this domain, one encounters multiple layers of both advantages and challenges that inevitably accompany this “remote” employment relationship. On the employer’s side, the foremost and most evident benefit arises from the absence of any obligation to cover commuting expenses for employees. Closely following is the reduction of costs that would ordinarily be allocated for securing business premises and ensuring occupational safety and property protection of the employer owned assets – costs which vary depending on the nature of the workspace, the number of employees, and the type of work equipment provided.

Equally evident is the employer’s enhanced capacity to operate effectively under unforeseen circumstances such as transportation strikes, adverse weather conditions, natural disasters, armed conflicts, terrorist attacks, or epidemiological crises (Radović-Marković, Radulović & Ćukanović, 2021, p. 101). At the lower end of the employer’s benefit hierarchy lies a seemingly minor yet fundamentally important advantage: the reduced risk of interpersonal conflict resolution. This correlation is proportionate to the fact that, in the absence of regular personal contact – that is, the shared physical workspace—employees tend to engage in fewer interpersonal disputes due to the reduced frequency of interactions. Conversely, this same condition gives rise to the need for cultivating inspirational remote team dynamics, which demands considerable time and resources to develop a fluid and effective model capable of fostering a cohesive and vibrant team atmosphere.

In this regard, organisations frequently resort to digital community-building initiatives, as these forms of work create a virtual organisational structure which, by definition, differs from the traditional corporate culture associated with office-based employment.

From the employee’s standpoint, work performed outside the employer’s premises entails a gain in “free” time, primarily because commuting obligations are eliminated. Time, in turn, is closely linked with money: employees who are not required to be physically present in an office are likewise spared the financial burden of maintaining appropriate business attire – particularly when working for employers with strict dress codes – or the often-high costs of daily meals, which in large urban centres may vary considerably depending on the office location.

At the top (or bottom) of the hierarchy of benefits for the remote worker lies the elimination of one of the key factors contributing to deteriorating mental health – the daily commute. Research conducted over the past decade has consistently demonstrated that longer commuting times can significantly impact mental health, particularly through an increased risk of depression. This finding supports the broader thesis that the urban environment exerts a direct influence on individual well-being (Wang *et al.*, 2021).

Furthermore, the concept of a repetitive environment – that is, work performed exclusively within the employer’s business premises – translates into a lack of stimulating or relaxing

content for the employee. This disadvantage is neutralised under remote work conditions: an employee whose duties require only a computer can be exposed to various sources of energy and stimulation, as they can change their working environment daily, assuming no personal or family obligations restrict such flexibility.

Nevertheless, it must not be generalised that such an arrangement is universally beneficial. As noted in recent psychological and organisational studies, “despite the obvious advantages of working from home, some individuals enjoy going to the office and engaging in direct contact with their colleagues, while others feel disconnected from their work and find it easier to communicate in person than via video conferencing” (Radović-Marković, Radulović & Ćukanović, 2021, p. 103). This observation confirms that social intelligence, which underpins human connection, manifests most strongly through verbal and non-verbal communication. In the context of remote work, communication channels are inherently limited, thereby constraining both interaction and mutual understanding.

2. UNCERTAINTIES OF THE DIGITAL WORK ENVIRONMENT IN SERBIAN LABOUR MARKET

The Employment act of the Republic of Serbia in its Article 42 unequivocally obliges employers to include in employment contracts governing work performed outside the employer's premises a provision stipulating reimbursement of expenses for the use and operation of the employee's own work equipment, as well as compensation for other work-related costs. These payments are subject to personal income tax on earnings, though they are not treated as social security contributions (Zakon o doprinosima za obavezno socijalno osiguranje [Law on Contributions for Mandatory Social Insurance, *Official Gazette of RS*, 2004], Art. 13). In practical terms, this provision means that the employer should bear the cost burden related to the employee's use and depreciation of personal equipment.

A position issued by labour inspectors and published on the *ParagrafLex* digital platform clarifies this point: “[w]hen an employee uses their own equipment, the employment contract must specify the amount of compensation that the employer is required to pay to the employee.” (Privredna komora Srbije, 2020). Employers' willingness to fulfil this obligation encounters a fundamental practical difficulty – how to calculate and express such expenses in monetary terms that realistically reflect actual costs. This challenge stems from the fact that these costs involve the consumption of electricity and internet services, which, within a household – even a single-member one – serve multiple purposes, while the proportion attributable to computer work and workspace lighting is comparatively minor, especially in the context of digital work.

Furthermore, the same Employment act obliges the employer to provide adequate working conditions and to organise work in such a way as to ensure the safety and protection of life and health at work, in accordance with the law and other regulations (Employment act, 2018, Art. 16). From the perspective of remote work, this obligation can arguably be described as one of the least logical statutory requirements – one that appears to have been incorporated by the legislator in a general and overly simplistic manner. It raises the question of whether the employer, merely by virtue of this mandatory legal provision, truly has the right, and more importantly, the practical ability, to enforce it without infringing upon other rights of the employee.

A reasonable conclusion is that the exchange of information between the parties represents the only rational means of ensuring compliance – preventing the employer from making either deliberate or accidental intrusions into the employee's private and family life while assessing workplace safety (Reljanović & Knežević Bojović, 2025, p. 124). Guided by this logic, many employers have opted for so-called self-assessment of occupational risks, thereby sharing responsibility with employees and avoiding the sensitive issue of domestic privacy intrusion. In practice, employers frequently require employees to complete structured home-working assessment forms, which typically group questions around themes such as work environment and equipment, organisation of work, and psychosocial factors. Employees may be asked to provide information on the safety of household electrical installations, adequacy of lighting, and noise levels. It is, however, reasonable to assume that an overwhelming majority of employees lack the expertise to competently evaluate and report such conditions, as doing so presupposes specialised technical knowledge typically acquired through formal education.

These forms often include questions such as whether work tasks and responsibilities are clearly defined, as well as inquiries into family members' opinions about home-based work or the frequency of contact with colleagues. In practice, this obligation tends to be reduced to a minimal preventive requirement – namely, for the employer to inform the employee about occupational risks associated with their position and to provide training on how to prevent health deterioration caused by work-related factors.

This type of training – both theoretical and practical – is accompanied by Form No. 6, prescribed under the Rulebook on Record-Keeping Methods and Deadlines in the Field of Occupational Safety and Health. The form identifies risks associated with prolonged sitting and computer use, including poor posture, overuse of musculoskeletal groups, visual fatigue, collision with hazardous surfaces, indirect electrical hazards, and prescribes corresponding preventive measures to ensure safe and healthy work conditions (Pravilnik o načinu vođenja i rokovima čuvanja evidencija u oblasti bezbednosti i zdravlja na radu [Rulebook on the Manner of Keeping and the Retention Periods of Records in the Field of Occupational Safety and Health], 2025).

Regarding the place of work, which is a mandatory element of all employment contracts – including those regulating remote work – there is currently no provision that explicitly exempts remote work arrangements from the requirement to specify a workplace location. As stated by authors of the professional commentary on remote work “[t]he place of work need not necessarily be known to the employer – the purpose of such work lies in its results, quality, and efficiency. Classical examples include programming, online product sales, and other occupations reducible to electronic communication or computer-based tasks. Naturally, this may extend to other types of work agreed upon by the employer and employee as suitable for performance from different locations. The law does not define remote work as a legal concept, leaving its modalities to mutual agreement. The only restriction, found in Article 44 of the Employment Act, is that remote work cannot include tasks hazardous to the employee's health or life, to others, or to the environment” (Paragraf Lex, 2014).

Consequently, employers remain formally obliged to indicate the employee's place of work (Employment Act, 2018, Art. 33), for example, by specifying the city, municipality, or administrative unit, thereby technically prohibiting the employee from leaving that location during working hours, even though, in practice, the location has little substantive significance in the context of remote work. This underscores the urgent need for legislative reform in this area.

A core pillar of successful remote employment relationships is mutual trust between employer and employee: trust reinforced by respect, dialogue, and demonstrable performance. However, this trust is not absolute; it necessarily implies a degree of work supervision. The most balanced form of supervision is periodic reporting, yet this may impose an additional burden on remote employees compared to those sharing a workspace with their supervisors, particularly where reporting requirements are unevenly applied.

In the absence of formal reporting systems, employers retain a legitimate right to monitor employees' work by other means, provided that such monitoring remains limited by the right to privacy at work – especially when it involves processing personal data—and is conducted lawfully, proportionately, purposefully, and transparently (Law on Personal Data Protection, 2018). Monitoring must also be restricted to the employee's working hours, while the protection of the employee's personal time has found expression in comparative law through the so-called “right to disconnect”, defined as “the employee's right not to be disturbed by work-related communications after working hours and not to be assigned any duties once they have left their workplace or completed their workday.” (Rajić Čalić, 2023, p. 306).

When comparing the privacy rights of employees working on the employer's premises with those of remote employees, it is “rational to conclude that an employee working from home expects a greater degree of privacy than one performing duties within the employer's facilities” (Reljanović, & Knežević Bojović, 2025). Balancing the right to privacy with the employer's legitimate interest in monitoring work processes and outputs presents significant challenges – especially when the nature of work involves video recording, where family members or others may unintentionally appear on screen. In an ideal scenario, employers might attempt to mitigate this risk by contractually shifting liability to the employee, requiring them to guarantee that surveillance systems will not capture third parties and disclaiming employer responsibility should such incidents occur.

Another facet of trust lies in the employer's belief that employees will act responsibly, diligently, and proactively in performing their duties. Trust, in this sense, is even more essential within organisations adopting remote or hybrid work models than in traditional employer–employee relationships. The essential question arises: how can an employer objectively assess the performance and reliability of an employee they he may never meet in person, especially when evaluation often relies on reactive measures – intervening only after poor results are observed?

Many employers employ psychological testing during recruitment, following informed consent procedures, as a means of reducing the risk of future dismissal due to insufficient professional integrity. Nonetheless, such practices must be regarded as exceptions, as employers are not authorised to compile psychological profiles of employees; such data processing fails to meet the legal standards of necessity and proportionality, even when formalised by internal acts. The principle of data minimisation requires justification of the necessity of collecting such data for employment purposes, which remains legally contentious across industries. Under EU law, psychological testing is largely equated with medical testing, permitted only in exceptional cases. The Council of Europe similarly discourages psychological assessments except where legitimate, job-relevant, and accompanied by adequate safeguards (Reljanović, & Knežević Bojović, 2025). The ILO Code of Practice on the Protection of Workers' Personal Data emphasizes that psychological testing should not be conducted against the worker's will, and that workers must be informed in advance of the purpose and consequences of such

assessments, with refusal not leading to sanctions or adverse treatment (International Labour Organization, 1997).

3. SUSTAINABILITY OF THE REMOTE WORK MODEL IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Current trends suggest that this form of work will soon gain traction even in the most rural areas of the Republic of Serbia, primarily because it is not constrained by geographic factors. Nevertheless, its expansion also brings certain adverse aspects, most notably social isolation, feelings of insecurity (whether personal or professional), and a tendency toward overwork – particularly among individuals who struggle to distinguish their professional duties from personal or family responsibilities, or among those who lack such obligations altogether. This trend is most pronounced among employers who have not succeeded, or are unable, to establish a genuine sense of community and team belonging, as well as in cases where employees lack genuine support from their close social or family environment. Networked remote collaboration, that is, virtual interaction among colleagues, is therefore an area in which employers will need to invest greater effort in the future, as not everyone is naturally inclined, or feels called, to provide support and ensure that neither the “remote” nor even the “present” colleague feels isolated. This implies that, if employers wish for this model of work to endure and continue to serve the purpose for which it was largely introduced, they must analyse, plan, design, initiate, encourage, and ultimately ensure that a sense of team belonging remains ever-present.

The results of surveys conducted by the author of this paper in 2021 and 2022 among employees of a client organization operating within the Republic of Serbia revealed that the feeling of pride in belonging to a team or employer exerts the strongest and most direct influence on the overall sense of belonging, surpassing even working conditions and other contributing factors. Should employers recognize this need and integrate a strategy that utilizes virtual content to strengthen the sense of belonging, they will be faced with a considerable challenge: to design content that is informative, preferably educational, engaging, creative, and appealing to diverse employee profiles; ideally interactive; and ultimately capable of inspiring enthusiasm and conversation among colleagues. Only through such engagement can the full potential of this form of content be realized, achieving one of its most legitimate objectives, fostering genuine team connection and cohesion.

The author of this paper, as a member of the senior management of an employer belonging to an international group primarily based in the Western world, participated in virtual social meetings, so-called town halls, which essentially represent open gatherings of the entire company or large teams, where management communicates directly with employees, inviting open dialogue and exchange of opinions. These meetings also serve to inform the entire workforce about operational results, planned or implemented changes, and future objectives, thereby reinforcing a culture of dialogue and employee engagement.

One effective way to ensure interactivity among team members, or within the subordinate–superior relationship, is through the design of knowledge-sharing formats. Such initiatives enable employers to further enhance the skills and competencies of their employees, while simultaneously encouraging them to share knowledge with others. In doing so, employers foster a genuine sense of growth and professional development and indirectly promote

solidarity and mutual support within the workforce. As the authors of publication on team-work observe, “[w]ithin a team, cooperation among members – not competition – emerges as the most significant factor in joint work” (Grubić Nešić, Zubanov, & Jokačević, 2021, p. 9).

Conversely, cultivating pride of belonging among employees may be one of the most difficult tasks for an employer. The reasons are numerous, among them the fact that individuals differ widely in their beliefs about what makes them feel proud at work. For some, it is the opportunity for personal and professional growth within the team; for others, the recognition and reward in terms of remuneration for extra effort; while some value the assurance that all working conditions meet a satisfactory standard.

A particularly negative aspect of remote and home-based work, often highlighted in scholarly and professional literature, concerns its impact on the notion of working time (Kovač-Orlandić, 2020, pp. 101–117), which under the constitutional framework of the Republic of Serbia is legally limited (Ustav Republike Srbije [Constitution of the Republic of Serbia], 2021, Article 60). In the context of remote work, the employee often exercises direct influence over their own working hours, except in systems that monitor entry and exit from virtual workspaces. Employees working from home or in informal environments (such as parks) may lack the external cues that signal the end of the working day—no colleagues rising from desks, no collective departure from the office. At this stage, self-discipline emerges as the decisive factor that, on a subconscious level, distinguishes an individual who consciously and continuously extends their working hours—an action which, if repeated, may lead to overexertion or even addiction—from one who is able to conclude their working day in a timely manner. The latter practice contributes significantly to the sustainability of remote work and to the preservation of mental health. In contemporary society, self-affirmation is often closely associated with productivity, which in itself represents an additional complicating factor.

The author argues that the Republic of Serbia should introduce mandatory supplementary health insurance for workers, particularly those working outside the employer’s premises, and establish penal provisions for non-compliance. This responsibility is, to some extent, already reflected in Article 67 of the Law on Occupational Safety and Health (Law on Occupational Safety and Health, 2023, Article 60), the violation of which is sanctioned as a misdemeanor under Article 101(20) of the same law. However, the existing provision is primarily designed to ensure compensation for damages; its purpose should be expanded to preventive protection of employees’ physical and mental integrity. Given the well-known resource constraints of the national healthcare system, facilitating alternative forms of healthcare, particularly those focused on mental well-being, would allow employers to safeguard both the health and satisfaction of their employees, thereby strengthening overall productivity and job satisfaction.

It is also worth noting one of the newest trends emerging from Generation Z, known as silent vacationing, the practice of combining work and vacation without disclosure (Rao, 2025). Though lacking a formal legal definition, silent vacationing in practice constitutes a form of employee misconduct, as it involves unreported and unsanctioned time off occurring during official working hours. In more progressive organisations, of which Serbia is slowly becoming acquainted, this risk is mitigated through transparent support for remote work based on performance evaluation, as well as through co-living arrangements that maintain accountability while fostering flexibility. The first rural co-living space in Serbia, Mokrin House, located in Mokrin, has been promoted as an ideal temporary residence for digital nomads (Mokrin House of Ideas, 2025). In the Spanish banking sector, in order to ensure

greater autonomy in organising work schedules according to individual needs, a corporate policy was developed with the aim of preventing managers from acting in ways that could undermine employees' autonomy – for instance, by determining when employees must be available or by scheduling unnecessary meetings (Eurofound, 2020, p. 17).

Post-pandemic survey data collected in the Republic of Serbia reveal nuanced perceptions of remote work. Among respondents, 64.1% considered remote work conducive to a more balanced integration of professional and private life, 43.59% identified greater personal time availability, and 33.33% reported enhanced productivity. Conversely, 51.28% observed blurred boundaries between work and personal spheres, while 33.33% experienced a sense of isolation. Collectively, these results illustrate the complex duality of remote work, wherein its advantages coexist with the structural and psychosocial challenges it entails.

4. THE FUTURE OF REMOTE AND HOME-BASED WORK IN SERBIAN ECONOMY

An indispensable component of a productive and sustainable employer–employee relationship lies in the personal attributes of the worker, confirming the *intuitu personae* nature of this legal relationship. These attributes, in addition to professional competencies, include enthusiasm, dedication, tact, loyalty, and a spirit of cooperation. Whether this work modality influences the development of such qualities – at least among those who do not possess them innately or have not acquired them early in life, remains to be determined. Evidently, this work model contributes to the development of individuality, not in contradiction but in potential synergy with community. On the contrary, valuing individuality may enhance the need for connection, knowledge sharing, and experience exchange, thereby strengthening the workplace community and making it more stable and resilient in the face of unforeseen circumstances and demands. As the Viceroy Kopaonik Serbia hotel proclaims in its policy: “*We cherish our differences, it’s what makes us stronger.*” (Viceroy Hotels & Resorts, 2025).

The loyalty of employees working outside their employer’s premises will, in the future, have to be nurtured through the employer’s virtual identity, so as to ensure that workers develop a genuine sense of belonging, as discussed earlier in this paper. This virtual identity must become an integral part of the employer’s reputation management policy, and consequently, a competitive advantage. The principles that could substantially contribute to this mission are diversity, inclusion, and equality, which often constitute key elements of corporate ideologies and business philosophies – both in internal governance and in external communication with partners and the public. Loyalty, as a by-product of employee satisfaction, correlates directly with workforce turnover, which can disrupt regular workflows, increase operational costs, and cause organisational instability (Sudiarta *et al.* 2025, p. 121). Developing employee loyalty should thus be seen as an investment in the future: a strategy for retaining quality personnel who may prove to be a decisive factor in market competition.

The concept of remuneration and its determining elements are likewise evolving under the influence of new work modalities and the latest demographic composition of the labour force. Traditionally, the principal components of salary are work performance and time spent at work, making it impossible to calculate and pay basic wages without both. However, in the new era, “results, not hours spent at the computer, are becoming the measure of success.” (Tešić, 2025). Hence, one of the essential elements of pay, time spent at work, is gradually losing its significance.

From an optimistic perspective, remote work is becoming an even more integrated part of work processes, thanks to the advancement of digital tools, artificial intelligence, and virtual environments that will allow for near-complete imitation of the physical workspace. Remote work does not necessarily limit participation in professional training, as online educational platforms and interactive webinars are becoming standard elements of everyday working life. Nevertheless, remote employees may still miss certain forms of informal learning, such as spontaneous conversations and knowledge exchange “on the go” (Eurofound, 2020, p.1). These gaps are expected to be mitigated by new forms of virtual socialisation, hybrid gatherings, and structured opportunities for learning and knowledge sharing, aimed at enhancing engagement, motivation, and productivity. Through these efforts, remote work may evolve into a practice that is not only efficient but also culturally and collegially fulfilling.

5. CONCLUSION

As Honoré de Balzac once wrote, “[a]ll happiness depends on courage and work” (Balzac, 2005, p. 123). Courage is indisputably a virtue, its connotation inherently positive, but the question that increasingly arises is: what of work itself? Is work, as we know it today, still a direct source of happiness, or has the 21st century, with its inheritance of Roman law, medieval feudalism, the industrial revolution, the entrance of women into the workforce, the founding of the International Labour Organization, and the rise of globalisation and digitalisation, divided the very concept of labour? How do remote and home-based work affect this philosophical and practical dimension?

If the trends of working outside the employer’s premises continue, answers to these questions may soon emerge. For now, one conclusion is clear: the absence of a comprehensive regulatory framework in the Republic of Serbia complicates the implementation of remote work, a phenomenon that marks an undeniable turning point in modern labour history. It directly impacts the organisational maturity of employers in Serbia, many of whom still struggle to recognise the necessity of this work model and to regulate it in a transparent and holistic manner.

For the successful integration of remote and home-based work as a standard practice, clear and comprehensive regulations must be developed, primarily addressing working hours, rest rights, occupational safety and health, and privacy protection. This regulatory framework must be flexible enough to accommodate the specificities of different industries, sectors, and job profiles, while ensuring reliable digital infrastructure and effective systems for monitoring work performance, though not necessarily time spent at work.

To fulfil its potential and serve as a genuine driver of progress, this framework must be accompanied, as a matter of legal obligation, by internal employer policies carefully designed to address loyalty, virtual identity, team communication, effective recruitment and employee satisfaction, while remaining less rigid in terms of supervision and working time. In distributed teams, communication becomes a critical success factor; in fact, it has become apparent that it is often necessary to share more information than usual to ensure alignment, transparency, and effective collaboration across distances. At the same time, maintaining a clear daily structure is essential for preserving a healthy work-life balance. Without physical separation between work and personal life, employees may face challenges in setting boundaries, which can lead to decreased well-being and long-term productivity. Establishing routines and clear expectations helps mitigate these risks and supports sustainable performance.

Employers play a key role in this transition. Beyond providing technical tools, they should actively support employees in adapting to remote work through training, clear guidelines, and organizational practices that foster engagement and accountability. Such investments not only improve productivity but also contribute to a stronger return on investment by enhancing employee satisfaction and retention.

Finally, the role of Serbian legislation remains crucial in shaping the future of remote work. Although certain legal frameworks recognize work outside traditional office settings, there is a need for more comprehensive and clearly defined regulations that address the specific challenges of remote employment. Strengthening legal support in areas such as labour rights, occupational safety, and data protection would provide greater certainty for both employers and employees, enabling more effective and widespread adoption of remote work practices.

Given existing legal and ethical challenges, the relationship between employee and employer in the context of remote work requires continuous dialogue and mutual adaptation. Thus, the future of remote work will largely depend on the ability of legislators, employers, and employees to jointly shape a flexible yet protective framework—one that supports the ongoing digital revolution while simultaneously ensuring dignified working conditions and equal opportunities for all.

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