

## Civilian Personnel

### Telework for Host Nation (HN) Employees in Belgium

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**Summary.** This policy defines the framework, describes the general conditions and provides general implementing instructions for conclusion and implementation of individual telework agreements for Host Nation (HN) employees in Belgium.

**Applicability.** This policy applies to U.S. Forces HN personnel employed by the U.S. Army, The Exchange and all other DoD agencies and field activities in Belgium. For the purpose of this policy, "U.S. Forces" include all activities except the U.S. Air Force, serviced by the Civilian Human Resources Agency, Europe Region (CHRA-E) in Belgium and positions paid from appropriated or non-appropriated funds.

**Proponent:** The proponent of this policy is the Headquarter USAREUR-AF G1, CPD (AEPE-C), Unit 29351, APO AE 09014-9351.

**Supplementation.** Organizations will not supplement this policy without prior approval of the HQ USAREUR-AF, ODCS, G-1, CPD.

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## 1. PURPOSE

This policy defines the framework, describes the general conditions, and provides implementing instructions for the concluding of individual telework agreements for Host Nation (HN) employees in Belgium. There are many agreed-upon benefits to the introduction of telework for the employer, the employees, and the general public. Those benefits include, inter alia, an improved employee morale; a better balance between the employee's work life and home life; reduced commuting-related stress and costs; less environmental pollution; the provision of reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities, single parents, or individuals during recovery from an injury or illness; and continuity of operations during emergency situations (for example, pandemic circumstances, natural disasters, weather-related emergency situations, power outages, mass-transit- system problems).

## 2. DEFINITION OF TERMS

**a. Telework.** A voluntary work arrangement under which an employee performs official duties at a worksite other than the regular worksite, either at home or at other locations that are geographically convenient to the employee.

**b. Telework Agreement.** A written agreement completed and signed by an employee and his/her supervisor that establishes the terms and conditions of a telework arrangement.

**c. Telework Eligibility.** The suitability for teleworking based on operational requirements of the agency, the characteristics of a job and the employee performing it, as determined by the employee's supervisor.

**d. Regular Worksite.** An approved location, where an employee regularly performs his or her official duties.

**e. Alternate Worksite.** A location away from the regular worksite that has been approved for the performance of assigned official duties (for example, an employee's home).

**f. Home Office Telework.** This term designates any form of telework performed at the employee's place of residence.

**g. Regular and Recurring Telework.** An approved work schedule for an employee to work at an alternate worksite on a regular, recurring and ongoing basis.

**h. Situational Telework.** Work that is performed at a location away from the regular worksite on a non- routine, ad-hoc basis. This includes work performed to complete a short-term special assignment or to accommodate special circumstances, even though it may occur continuously for a specific period.

## 3. IMPLEMENTATION

### a. General Requirements.

(1) As a general rule, there is neither an overall entitlement, nor it is an obligation to telework, as the concept of teleworking implies a voluntary work arrangement, based on a mutual agreement between the HN employee and his/her supervisor.

(2) Exceptions from the general rule, stated in para. 1 above may be possible IAW mandatory decisions and requirements, imposed by HN authorities, most likely in the state of emergencies, like pandemics, natural disasters or any critical situation, graded as a danger for the general public by the Belgian Government.

(3) Supervisors will serve as the approving authority, considering all requests for telework on a case-by-case basis. While approving or rejecting requests for telework, supervisors should be mindful of treating all employees equitably and fairly. If the supervisor denies the request, he/she will need to provide a detailed justification to support his/her decision. In case of disagreement between the employee and his/her supervisor, the second-line supervising authority of the directorate will render the final decision.

(4) Once telework is agreed upon, the HN employee and his/her supervisor will sign a written telework agreement, which will not adversely interfere with employee's individual employment contract. Furthermore, it will not affect any rights or obligations, stated in the published and entered into force version of the HN Labor Policy, USAG Benelux 600-1. Provisions in any further valid policies and agreements shall also remain unaffected.

(5) Government-owned automation and IT equipment will be provided in support of telework.

(6) Employees must provide for internet and telephone connections at the agreed upon telework site.

(7) Employees and supervisors will take the fundamental courses that are mandated by the U.S. Forces in the scope of their Telework Program, available at: <https://www.telework.gov/>.

#### **b. Types of Telework Arrangements.**

(1) There are two types of telework:

(a) Based on an approved work schedule under which employees perform telework on a regular, recurring and ongoing basis (regular and recurring telework), in general, authorized, for a maximum of two days per week. In exceptional cases, justified by employee's personal needs and/or operating requirements of the employing organization, additional two days of telework may be granted. Supervisors shall carefully assess, approve and document such exceptional cases, in particular the specific circumstances, justifying granting of additional days up to a maximum of four days of telework per week.

(b) On an irregular and non-recurring (ad-hoc) basis, telework may be approved and performed at an alternate worksite, usually as an occasional, one-time measure. Such type of telework is commonly known as situational telework and will be typically authorized for short-term projects, reports, short-term needs of the concerned employee. IAW the specifics of each case, supervisors shall approve situational telework for the period of time needed to complete the specific project or for the time needed to satisfy employee's individual needs, justifying his/her request to telework. Supervisors shall decide on a case-by-case basis for how long situational telework should be granted and accordingly document their decision.

(2) The types of telework mentioned above offer supervisors and employees the flexibility to conclude the telework arrangement which best meets the requirements of the organization and the personal situation of the employee.

NOTE: Either type of telework arrangements must be approved by the employee's supervisor in writing before commencement.

#### **4. RESPONSIBILITIES**

##### **a. Employees.**

(1) To request telework, employees must submit a written request to their first-line supervisor.

(2) Employees exercising telework will—

(a) Bear all operating costs (e.g., electricity, heating and costs for internet and telephone connections) generated by teleworking at their home office. However, the employer will pay an allowance, if this is required by applicable Host Nation (HN) law.

(b) Complete and sign a Safety Checklist for safety features at the home office.

(c) Ensure to set up at their own expenses, an ergonomic (healthy and safe) workplace at their approved telework site.

(d) Maintain a safe work environment at their home office and report home office accidents or injuries to their supervisor without delay. To be noted that home-based accidents while teleworking during the agreed teleworking periods will be considered as any work accidents taking place during the

(e) Performance of the employment contract.

(f) Inform their supervisor without delay about any circumstances affecting their ability to perform their assigned work at the telework site (e.g., power outage).

(g) Ensure they can be reached by telephone and email during the agreed upon working time. Employees exercising telework will respond—without undue delay - to missed phone calls and emails of supervisors, colleagues and coworkers and any further individuals from or outside their organization.

(h) Ensure that official data, phone calls, virtual conferences and any further work-related documents or interactions, take place in a secure environment. If any issues occur, employees shall immediately notify their supervisor in the purpose to adopt appropriate security measures and solve or avoid issues, already occurred or possible to arise. Supervisors shall cultivate an environment, where employees are not afraid to report issues and failures.

##### **b. Supervisors.**

IAW operational requirements and availability of the necessary equipment supervisors of employees requesting telework will—

- (1) Determine whether the position and the employee are eligible for telework;
- (2) Document in writing their concurrence with the telework request.

**c. Automation and Information Technology (IT) Support.**

Employing organizations will determine the availability of Government-owned automation equipment to support employees performing official duties at alternate worksites, including home offices. Automation equipment must be securely configured and accredited to support telework. If the technology that is essential to the performance of telework is unavailable or not securely configured and accredited to support the required tasks, telework requests cannot be approved. Employees shall protect the Government-furnished equipment and property and immediately notify their supervisors and the POC for IT matters, in cases of any troubles occurring in regards to the provided equipment. Employees are responsible to ensure that appropriate physical, administrative and technical safeguards are used to protect the confidentiality of records/information at the telework site. Employees are not authorized, under any circumstance, to take classified documents CUI or higher, whether in a printed or electronic format, to alternate worksites.

**5. WORKING TIME**

- a. Employees will serve their regular working hours when teleworking.
- b. Teleworking employees will not work overtime at the telework site without prior approval of their supervisor.
- c. Procedures and rules for requesting annual leave, leave without pay, overtime, administrative leave and comp time, as well as sick absences will continue to apply unchanged.
- d. Employees maintain the same rights and obligations as if they were at the workplace, not teleworking.

**6. TERMINATION OF THE TELEWORK AGREEMENT**

The telework agreement can be terminated in writing by either the employee or the supervisor. In the case of an employer-initiated termination of the agreement, the employee will be notified accordingly at least two weeks in advance.



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