

Working Remotely: Working Out the New Normal

*Mala tempora currunt*¹. For over a year, we have been riding a rollercoaster of emotions – from fear, dread, to relief and hope, with a pinch of growing disillusionment. The ever-changing situation in terms of the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on our daily and professional lives has left many wanting to fast-forward through this physically and mentally exhausting time until everything goes *back to normal*. But is this even possible?

This first year of the pandemic, the *annus terribilis*, will likely go down in history as a year of trials and failures, accompanied by questionable governmental measures all around the world (be it too weak or too severe), but also as a time of perseverance and flexibility. After all, it brought out in people a strong desire to make this new reality work. Both employers and employees were doing their utmost to maintain performance at work relatively uninterrupted – with the aid of online solutions allowing for remote work. And so, we have suffered a lot, but we have also learned a lot.

Alas, it does not seem that in the foreseeable future we shall go back to normal. As Ed Yong, a science journalist for *The Atlantic*, noted, “We long to return to normal, but **normal led to this**”. To avert the future pandemics we know are coming, we **MUST** grapple with all the ways normal failed us. We have to build something better.” What we must do, thus, is to get used to this abnormal new normal – also in terms of our private and professional lives and find the right work-life balance that would prepare us for history repeating itself (knock on

¹ Latin for “bad times are upon us”.

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wood!). Granted, working out this new work-related routine will not be easy for anyone, but one thing is clear: *laborare pugnare parati sumus*².

Needless to say, we must not forget about the sector and professions who are unable to operate under the various levels of lockdowns or introduced restrictions. At the same time, there are also those who are simply unable to utilize the new digital solutions, as they may lack human and financial resources or infrastructure to even introduce them. Acknowledging that not everyone can reap the fruits of digitization, let us state it clearly and without hesitation: without it, dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic in all walks of life would be much harder to bear.

In the 14th issue of the *4liberty.eu Review*, we take on the topic of remote work and the impact it has on our lives, the economy, as well as its future applications. With articles from Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, and broadening our CEE perspective with a voice from Croatia, we offer a liberal outlook on the new reality we have been forced to face head on. A reality that has clear advantages, but which is also accompanied by some serious challenges. It is now our task to embrace the former and tackle the latter. Because, to quote Goethe, "*In the realm of ideas everything depends on enthusiasm, in the real world all rests on perseverance.*" And since the real world has verified some of our ideas, persevere we must.

Stay safe and strong,



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² Latin for "to work, to fight, we are ready."