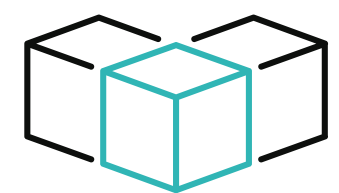


TELEWORK IN

ESTONIA



TÖÖANDJAD



Telework in estonia

In Europe, [in the context of the health crisis 2020], several million workers have started to work from home, and Eurofound estimates that they represent around 40% of all employees (Trindade, 2021). In Denmark and Sweden, 38% and 33% of the workforce work are using this method, respectively. Other European countries with very high indicators are the Netherlands (31%), Luxembourg (29%), United Kingdom (27%), France (26%), and Estonia (25%) (Oscar Vargas-Llave, 2020).

According to Statistics Estonia, the highest share of teleworking is found in the field of information and communication (54% of employees have teleworked), followed by professional, scientific and technical activities, and financial and insurance activities, where teleworkers accounted for more than 40% of all employees in the same field of activity. The share of teleworkers in public administration, national defence, and real estate is nearly 30%.

The results of a survey¹ commissioned by the Estonian Employers' Confederation show that teleworking is available at least some days a week in 94% of companies (Figure 1). However, teleworking is still mainly available to office workers or representatives of specific occupations. Also, according to this questionnaire, teleworking was more common among information, communication, finance and insurance activities.

TELEWORKING MEANS that, by agreement between the parties, the employee fulfils their daily duties outside the employer's location (subsection 6 (4) of the Employment Contracts Act). Telework is performed by agreement of the parties. The employer cannot force the employee to telework and the employee cannot demand teleworking.

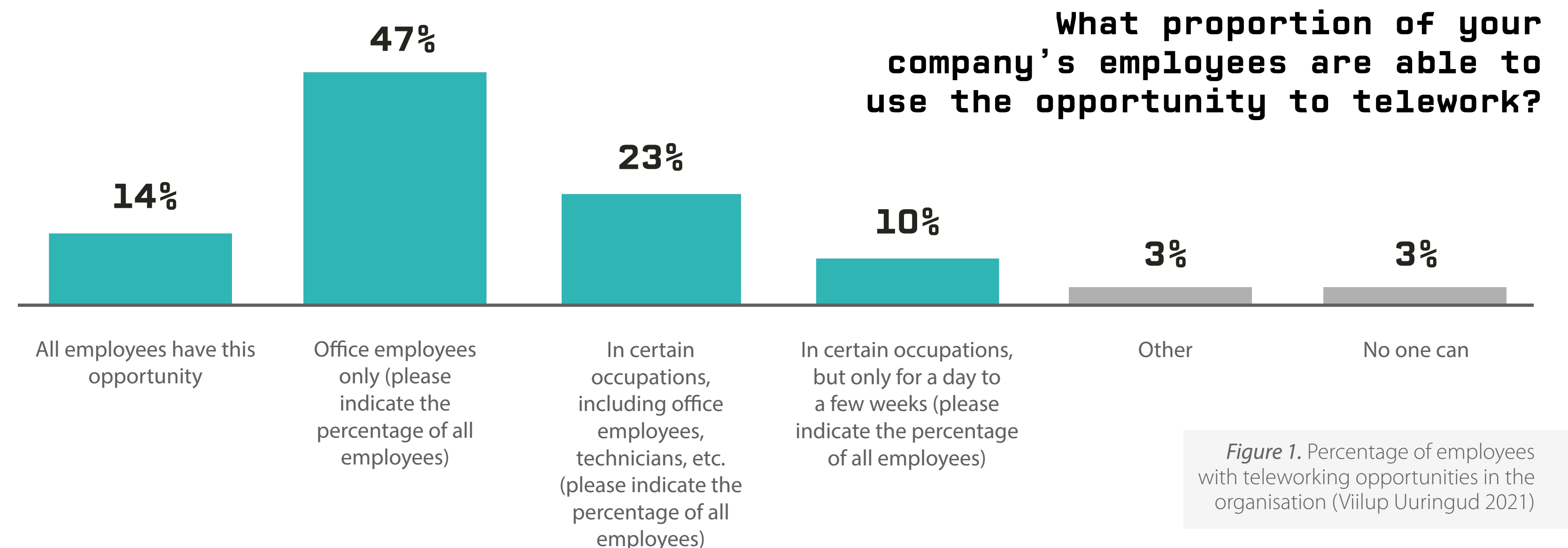


Figure 1. Percentage of employees with teleworking opportunities in the organisation (Viilup Uuringud 2021)

¹ Due to the sharp increase in the topicality of telework in 2020, the Estonian Employers' Confederation commissioned Viilup Uuringud OÜ to conduct a study titled "Challenges and policy recommendations related to telework from the perspective of employers", on the basis of which most of this information material has been compiled.

DIFFERENT TERMS ARE USED WITH REGARD TO TELEWORKING

Telework, telecommuting, remote work, virtual work, work-from-home, distance work, distributed work, eWork, flexible work and flexible working arrangements, flexiwork.

Useful information related to teleworking

1. Labour Inspectorate's Working Life Information System
2. Occupational health and safety guide for teleworkers
3. The agreement between the Estonian Trade Union Confederation and the Estonian Employers' Confederation on teleworking

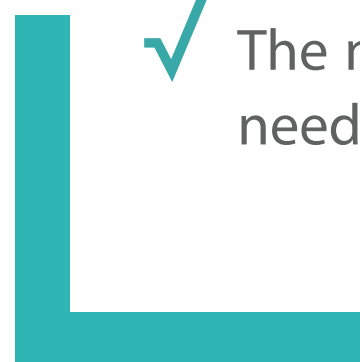
Benefits of teleworking

Tabel 1. Benefits of teleworking (source: Viilup Uuringud 2021)

From the country's perspective	From the employer's perspective	From the contractor's perspective
Increase in financial capacity	Save on office expenses	Save on travel expenses
Working time flexibility	For some employees, the possibility of teleworking is an important argument for choosing a job, making it easier to find employees	Well suited to some employees, helps save time, better reconcile family life and work
Workplace flexibility	The use of teleworking allows enterprises to hire employees from abroad or from other regions of Estonia	Very important for some employees, suitable, for example, in sales work
Increasing competences	Managers gained new skills and started to lead in a more targeted way	Increased digital skills, labour market advantage



Key challenges for employers in teleworking

- ✓ The need to invest in home office equipment, pay fringe benefit tax
 - ✓ It is difficult for an employer to check how an employee actually works and how safe their home office is
 - ✓ Various health problems for employees create additional problems and expenses
 - ✓ It is more difficult for an employer to control and influence the use of working time
 - ✓ Keeping a sense of teamwork and monitoring a person's well-being are more difficult from a distance
 - ✓ For managers, the challenge is to monitor work performance
 - ✓ Difficult for teams accustomed to face-to-face contact to adapt to virtual communication
 - ✓ For some employees, teleworking is not suitable, speed and quality of work are reduced
 - ✓ Need to invest in increasing the digital literacy of employees, some employees are reluctant to use technologies
 - ✓ The need to invest in managers to get the skills they need to support teleworking
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Employers' proposals for changes to legislation in relation to teleworking

- ✓ Clarify the rules for ensuring occupational safety in the home office, including the definition of occupational accidents and work harmful to health when working from home (temporarily). Give more responsibility to the employee
- ✓ The acquisition of work equipment necessary for healthy working in home offices would be exempt from the fringe benefit tax, at least in part
- ✓ If the employer guarantees a workplace in an office but the employee wishes to work in a home office, the employer is not obliged to reimburse the costs of the home office
- ✓ Less strict requirements would apply to hybrid work
- ✓ Employers would like to include workload ranges in contracts, rather than fix a constant workload for everyone
- ✓ In the employment register, employers would like to see if another employer already pays the minimum social tax, so that they do not have to pay double for low workload employees
- ✓ Greater flexibility is sought to hire labour from abroad



Based on the survey, employers' suggestions were complemented by the following

- ✓ Acquisition of work equipment necessary for healthy working in home offices must be exempt from fringe benefit tax, at least in part
- ✓ If the employer guarantees a workplace in an office but the employee wishes to work in a home office, the employer is not obliged to reimburse the costs of the home office
- ✓ Less stringent requirements on the working environment and employer liability in the case of hybrid work
- ✓ Employers only become liable to pay compensation if an employee spends more than half of their time in a home office
- ✓ Increasing the tax exemption for health compensation to support mental and physical health.

Providing teleworking opportunities for employees

Among the activities that encourage teleworking, the employer most often buys the employee a computer and other working tools (Figure 2). Approximately one-third of employers also buy office furniture for home offices and invest in the health and safety of employees at the teleworking location.

SOURCES USED: Viilup Uuringud. Challenges and policy recommendations related to telework from the employers' perspective. Tallinn 2021.

What teleworking opportunities do you offer your employees? Multiple answers possible.

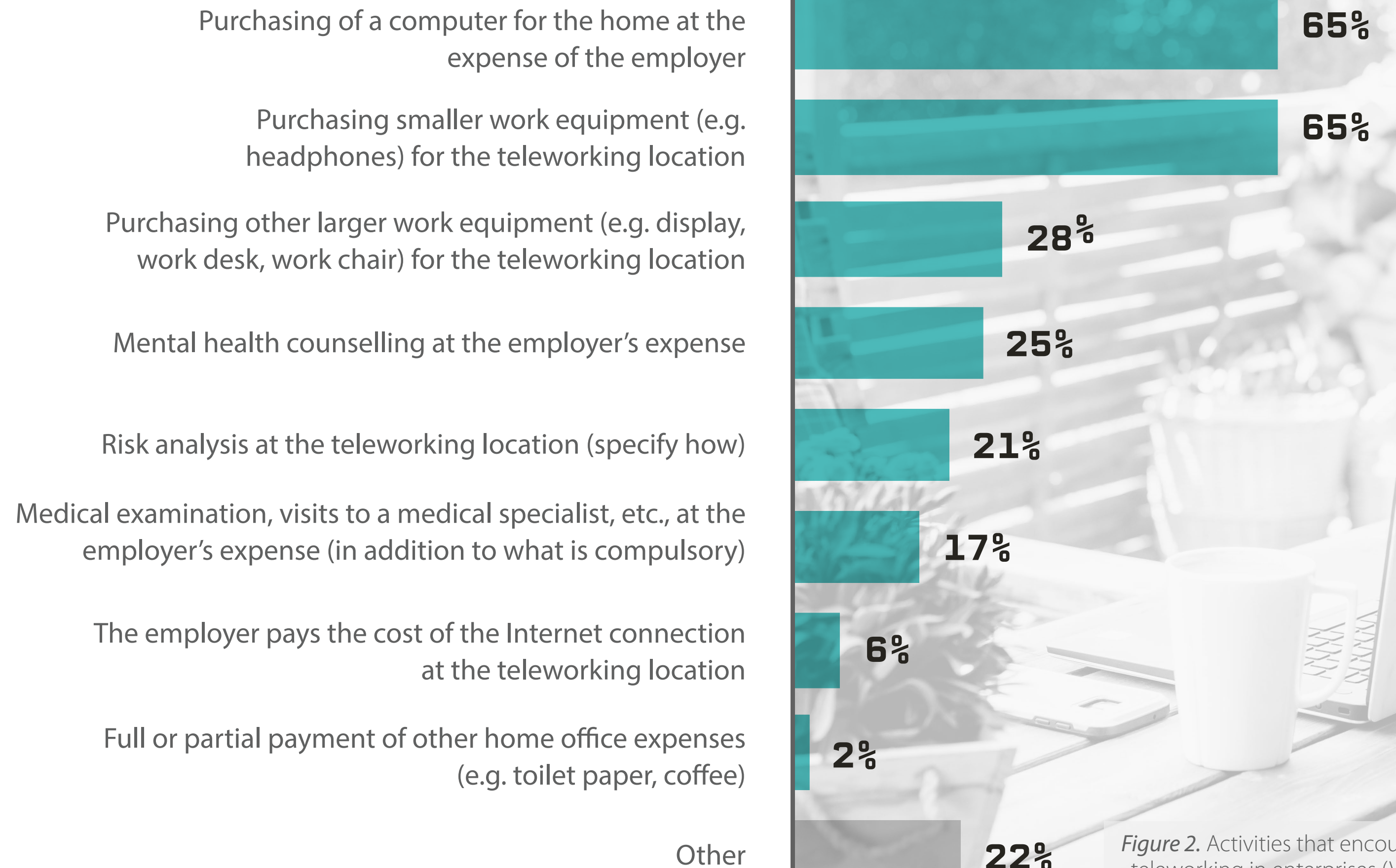


Figure 2. Activities that encourage teleworking in enterprises (Viilup Uuringud 2021)

Õppematerjal on valminud rahvusvahelise koostööprojekti Norway Grants „Facilitated access to work through flexible work“ raames.

