

Regulation of Working Time in the Context of the Global Transition to Flexible Forms of Work

 Oleg M. Yaroshenko¹,  Anatolii P. Getman²,  Ehor S. Nazymko³,  Vladyslav S. Tkachenko⁴,
 Olena Ye. Lutsenko^{5*}

^{1,4,5}Department of Labor Law Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University 61024, 77 Hryhorii Skovoroda Str., Kharkiv, Ukraine.

²Department of Environmental Law Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University 61024, 77 Hryhorii Skovoroda Str., Kharkiv, Ukraine.

³Donetsk State University of Internal Affairs 25015, 1 Velyka Perspektyvna Str., Kropyvnytskyi, Ukraine.

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Abstract. This study explores the impact of remote and hybrid work models, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, on working time regulations in Ukraine. It aims to assess how these changes affect working hours and propose legal reforms to enhance work-life balance and productivity. The study employs a range of research methods, including analysis to assess changes in work patterns, synthesis to integrate various perspectives, and induction and deduction to develop theoretical and practical insights. It examines changes in work schedules and evaluates existing regulations, using analytical methods to assess trends in flexible working hours and identify areas for improvement. The shift to remote and hybrid work challenges existing laws, particularly regarding fairness and workers' rights. It highlights the need for legal reforms to address these new work models. The study comes to the conclusion that Ukraine needs to update its working time laws to align with modern work practices. Existing regulations fail to ensure fairness and flexibility for workers, making legislative changes essential to accommodate remote and hybrid work environments. The findings recommend reforming Ukrainian legislation to strike a balance between flexibility and fairness, thereby promoting a healthier work-life balance and enhancing overall productivity in the evolving work landscape.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, remote employment has become an increasingly important labor relations problem worldwide. Young, ambitious employees increasingly opt for remote work, running a cafe business at home or in other convenient locations. This results from changing business prospects as they seek to reduce labor costs while improving employee comfort and engagement. Large Ukrainian companies gradually transfer their IT, accounting, marketing, and creative staff to remote work. While there have been positive developments, Ukrainian legislation still has significant gaps in regulating working hours in the context of flexible working. This creates problems for the new and effective application models of work, which require urgent research and reform of legal norms. Since labor legislation must adapt to changing circumstances, revision of organizational and legal forms can solve the problem of unemployment and contribute to stability in the labor market.

The COVID-19 scenario accelerated this trend, leading to a marked increase in the use of remote and hybrid work. This changed the usual methods of workflow management, allowing workers more freedom to organize their working days and more flexibility in planning. The introduction of new organizational structures resulted in the cancellation of the requirement to arrive at work at a specific hour. Several scholars have delved into the topic of flexible work arrangements and working hours during the pandemic. Specifically, [Vyas \(2022\)](#) has examined the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the labor market, specifically focusing on the introduction of flexible working arrangements, the evolution of the employee-employer relationship, and the promotion of work-life balance. He analyses how these changes, in particular hybrid and remote work, will affect traditional practices and the future of the labor market. [Toniolo-Barrios and Pitt \(2021\)](#) explored the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on homeworking, in particular the difficulties in separating work and personal life. The pandemic led to reduced productivity and motivation, increased stress, and worse mental health for workers. He suggests using mindfulness as a way to alleviate these problems, improve attention to work, and manage screen fatigue.

[Niebuhr, Borle, Börner-Zobel, and Voelter-Mahlknecht \(2022\)](#) investigated the impact of working from home (WFH) on health and job satisfaction among German workers. The analysis showed that the functionality of technical equipment at home has a positive effect on health and job satisfaction. However, a greater proportion of working from home is associated with increased stress symptoms and reduced job satisfaction. The feeling of increased autonomy positively affects the pleasure of work. The results suggest that there is a need for legal regulations to facilitate remote work. [Von Gaudecker, Holler, Janys, Siflinger, and Zimpelmann \(2020\)](#) investigated the impact of social distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic on working hours in the Netherlands. The study revealed a decrease in the total number of working hours, particularly among self-employed and less-educated individuals. Workers with higher education work more hours from home. Support from the government lowers unemployment rates and allows many workers to continue working from home. [Chung and Van der Horst \(2020\)](#) investigated the impact of different types of flexible working arrangements on unpaid overtime work in the UK. The results show that flexible working hours, often introduced to improve work-life balance, do not significantly increase unpaid overtime. Controlling the schedule to enhance efficiency, particularly for male and female professionals without children, can result in increased hours. It can also deepen gender inequalities in the labor market.

The aim of the study is to examine the impact of COVID-19 on working hours through the analysis of remote and hybrid work and Ukrainian legislation. The study evaluates schedule changes in corporations to improve productivity and compares them with Ukrainian legislative adaptations. The emphasis is on solutions to improve the legal regulation of working hours and the balance between work and life.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A key component of this study is a thorough analysis of Ukrainian legislation to determine to what extent it is consistent with current working conditions, particularly in light of international trends. This involves assessing existing laws on remote work and identifying any loopholes that could prevent the successful implementation of flexible working hours. The study's methodology employs a range of analytical methods to investigate the impact of remote and hybrid working post-COVID-19 on working time planning. The first step is a thorough analysis of adjustments to work schedules in international firms, namely organizations such as Microsoft, Google, and Unilever. This analysis assesses the impact of new work patterns on employee satisfaction, productivity, and overall well-being. It was possible to determine the relationship between flexible working hours and their impact on work results, using analytics to collect data on changes in working hours, working conditions, and employee satisfaction (Angelici & Profeta, 2024).

The process of integrating various research components into a unified whole, known as data synthesis, enables the identification of broad patterns. We used an inductive technique for this purpose, enabling the creation of broad generalizations based on specific cases of work schedule changes in transnational companies and Ukrainian reality. This method assisted us not only in identifying optimal practices but also in determining the aspects of these practices that Ukraine could implement. Deduction made it possible to evaluate the effectiveness of actual initiatives. It has become possible to evaluate the practical application of theoretical ideas, such as work-life balance, and their impact on employee motivation and overall productivity through the deductive method.

The dialectical method plays an equally important role in studying the features that arise in the context of the subject under analysis and developing strategies to solve them. This facilitated the understanding of how various components, including social, economic, and legal aspects, interact and influence the organization of working time. Thanks to the analytical method, extensive research of data from several sources is possible, such as employee surveys, performance reports, and legal documents. This helps to identify the main problems and opportunities related to working time and legislative changes. This made it possible to create detailed proposals for improving working conditions and adapting to new requirements (Kozub, 2021).

There are parallels and differences between the tactics of adapting the work schedule used by multinational companies and those in Ukraine, as demonstrated by comparative analysis. This informs the search for best practices suitable for the Ukrainian environment. For example, comparing the practice of introducing a shorter working week in Western organizations with the practices of Ukrainian enterprises helped identify features that were useful for increasing productivity and reducing stress among Ukrainian workers. Generalization, the final step, allows you to carefully analyze and summarize the data in order to draw broad conclusions. This stage guarantees the formulation of proposals aimed at improving Ukraine's legislative framework and time management practices.

3. RESULTS

Working time is the amount of time that an employee needs to perform tasks defined in his employment contract by the law or mutual agreement of the parties. The number of hours worked during the working day or working week determines the length of working time. Under the working day, understand the time that the employee spends on work during the day according to the established schedule. The number of hours worked per week determines the working week. Employees with flexible work schedules can change their schedule, place of work, or job responsibilities according to their unique needs or circumstances (Tkachenko, 2024b). By increasing business efficiency and productivity, these types of employment emphasize helping workers find a balance between personal and professional life. Employers can encourage their employees to work more productively and perform more innovative and creative tasks by providing flexible working hours. They can also demonstrate their dedication, increase motivation, and reduce missed time.

Below are some of the most popular types of flexible employment:

1. During a flexible work schedule, employees can independently choose the hours of the beginning and completion of work while maintaining a certain number of working hours during the day or week. Remote work means that employees can work from home or any other place, not necessarily being present in the office.
2. Employees tend to work fewer days per week yet maintain their total working hours, frequently combining this with extended workdays. Division of the workplace is when two employees share one position, distributing responsibilities and working hours among themselves.
3. Part-time employees work fewer hours per week than the standard number, typically 20-30 hours instead of 40.
4. A compressed working week is when employees work full working days but fewer days per week, for example, four 10-hour days instead of five 8-hour days (Dmytrenko, 2021b).

Working weeks consist of either five or six days. The rules of internal labor regulations, or schedules of variability, which are approved by the owner or his authorized body in agreement with the elected body of the primary trade union organization of the enterprise, institution, or organization, determine the duration of daily work. The establishment of a five-day working week aligns with the established duration of the work week. However, individual enterprises, institutions, and organizations may establish a six-day working week with one day off due to their production needs, making the use of a five-day working week inappropriate.

We divide working time into two categories: basic working time, which is the amount of time an employee is legally required to work by law or contract, and non-basic working time, which is a legally protected deviation from basic working time. The first type consists of regular, reduced hours for part-time work. Now let's talk about the non-essentials: extra work, weekends, and holidays (Tkachenko, 2024a).

A healthy balance between work and rest is the most essential human need. In this sense, the promotion of rest and control over working time are the two most important components of increasing incentives for labor participation. Increased worker autonomy

has always been associated with flexible working hours. Some professionals perform their tasks quickly and then wait in the wings until the end of the day. In this case, a flexible schedule can be an excellent motivation. If someone works quickly and well, he will understand that he does not need to sit at the table ([Llop-Gironés et al., 2021](#)).

The provisions of the collective agreement or internal labor rules of the enterprise, approved by the trade union, govern a flexible work schedule. Flexible working hours and non-standard employment have led to the introduction of a new management philosophy. This is because it has improved work discipline and instilled in workers a conscientious and innovative work ethic. The employer can guarantee the qualifications and aspirations of employees, increase productivity and efficiency, and maintain the financial stability of the company by creating individual work schedules and workloads for each employee. In addition, they can prevent problems that arise from the need to lay off employees in the event of an economic crisis or organizational or managerial changes ([Rym, 2020](#)).

Giving workers the freedom to choose when to finish work helps them balance work and personal commitments. However, it is more difficult to distinguish working time from personal time, as employees can collaborate and complete projects outside the normal working day. However, blurring boundaries causes problems with emotional exhaustion and overload. The lack of a clear line between business and personal commitments often encourages employees working from home to work longer hours. This is especially true for people who have a flexible schedule without a clear end of the working day or work remotely full time. The absence of physical barriers that separate work from home increases stress and reduces recovery and rest time. This effect can persist even in a hybrid work structure where workers spend some time in the office.

Moving from controlling working times to evaluating performance is another important step. The traditional office model assessed employees based on the number of hours they worked, but remote and hybrid working necessitates a shift in perspective, emphasizing performance and productivity over work hours. To this end, many European countries have introduced new digital tools for monitoring development and results. These tools include online communication platforms, project management software, and other technologies that enable performance monitoring ([Dmytrenko, 2021a](#)).

The growth of remote work has changed the rules of work in European countries, in addition to productivity and time management. States began to think about whether to create new standards governing work in remote environments. One important measure was to consolidate workers' rights to take a break at the end of the day, as in France. This privilege protects employees from undue interference by the employer in their personal lives and reduces the risk of professional burnout ([Yaroshenko, Sereda, Harashchuk, Mohilevskiy, & Yushko, 2024](#)).

One of the important effects of the growth of hybrid work is the change in employees' interactions. Online solutions have become more important for remote teams to manage work and organize tasks. Additionally, this has made it challenging to maintain team spirit and communication. The disparity between remote workers and those most likely to be in the office can be concerning. To prevent this, companies are introducing new collaboration models and encouraging open communication between all team members, even if they are physically absent.

The COVID-19 epidemic caused a significant acceleration in the global transition to flexible forms of labor, which necessitated new methods of regulating working hours. Ukrainian businesses have created various methods of time management in response to changing market conditions, with an emphasis on achieving a balance between employee productivity and job satisfaction. The experience of Ukrainian business is an intriguing illustration of how to adapt to changing circumstances and methodological variations.

One of the most popular strategies has been the use of flexible working hours, which allow employees to organize their time while maintaining the same number of hours worked. This is practical for companies in the creative or IT sectors, where deadlines are less important than results. Companies like Soft Serve and Genesis are actively implementing flexible working practices. Employees now have greater freedom to decide when their working day starts and ends, allowing them to better manage their personal and professional lives.

Another example is the introduction of remote work. Many companies, including Grammarly and Ajax Systems, have switched to a fully remote or hybrid work style, with employees working both at home and in the office. In addition to increasing production volumes, this allowed us to save on renting office space, which was especially important for large businesses in Kyiv and other large cities ([Drozd, 2022](#)). Additionally, enterprises employ innovative methods to monitor employee productivity and standardize working hours. For instance, Rozetka has implemented a KPI (Key Performance Indicators) system that prioritizes the achievement of specific outcomes over the hourly recording of working hours. Therefore, the focus is not on the number of hours a person works in their position but rather on the results they achieve within a specific timeframe. It is also important to note that some industrial enterprises, such as Metinvest, are testing the concept of a shorter working week. Employees can work more but get more vacation days, which increases motivation and reduces exhaustion.

The transition to a flexible form of work in Ukraine shows how the company can adapt to new problems. Flexible work schedules not only boost employee productivity but also enhance their physical and mental well-being. This is especially useful when stress and uncertainty are high. Germany originally introduced the usage of a flexible (free, sliding) work schedule in 1967, giving the employee the freedom to determine the beginning and end of the working day, provided they work the required number of hours. Under pressure from trade unions, Sweden introduced a system of flexible working hours in the 1960s. It is now the second most flexible country in the EU, after Latvia. Subsequently, the United States, Switzerland, Norway, the United Kingdom, and other industrialized countries adopted a similar approach ([Melnychuk, Melnychuk, & Pavlichenko, 2022](#)).

The International Labor Organization has created a set of global labor standards to give men and women the chance to work fulfilling and productive jobs while maintaining their freedom, equality, security, and dignity. Based on these proposals, the response to the COVID-19 crisis led to the formation of legislation that established labor standards in Ukraine. Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated March 11, 2020, No. 211 established quarantine, which prohibits multiple mass gatherings of more than 200 people to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus in the country.

The needs of the time led to the adoption of several laws in Ukraine, such as "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine on Improving the Legal Regulation of Remote, Home-Based Work and Labor with a Flexible Mode of Labor" ([Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2021a](#)) and "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine Aimed at Preventing the Emergence and Spread of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)" ([Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2021b](#)). These laws laid the foundation for legal regulation of specific working hours ([Dovhan & Amelicheva, 2021](#)). The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Law of Ukraine No. 540-IX "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts Aimed at Providing Additional Socio-Economic Guarantees in Connection with the Spread of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)" as a continuation of the legal regulation of labor relations ([Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2020](#)).

The final provisions provide that during the quarantine or restrictive measures related to the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the employer can send an employee to perform work determined by an employment contract from home for a certain period. The employer may also grant the employee leave with their consent. Additionally, the employer now possesses expanded rights to modify the operations of bodies, institutions, enterprises, and organizations, particularly in relation to the reception and service of citizens and legal entities. In such situations, employers should make it possible to inform the public through websites and other communication channels.

Taking into account the needs of today, Article 21 of the Labor Code of Ukraine has been changed to better define the term "employment contract" and get rid of the requirement for employees to follow the rules of internal labor regulations ([Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1971](#)). We have also extended the list of reasons for concluding an employment contract in writing. Thus, paragraph 6-1, "Conclusion of an employment contract on remote (home) work" ([Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1971](#)) supplements Article 24 of the Labor Code of Ukraine. In addition, this law amended the previous version of Article 60 of the Labor Code, which was entitled "Dividing working time into parts". Note that the law allows enterprises with special requirements and the nature of work to divide the working day into parts, as long as the total duration of working time does not surpass the established working day. As a rule, a certain form of article was used to facilitate the service of the population, especially trade institutions, catering establishments, household and communal services, urban transport drivers, etc. The aim of the Ukrainian Labor Code version of Article 60 was to regulate the idea of flexible working hours. This concept today should be understood as a form of labor organization that allows the establishment of a labor regime that differs from the established rules of internal labor regulations, subject to the established daily, weekly, or, for a certain accounting period (two weeks, a month, etc.), working hours ([Tamozhansky, 2020](#)).

Following improvements in March 2020, this paper has gained a deeper understanding of the individual working time regimes. This is a written agreement that allows the employee to work flexible hours for an indefinite period, regardless of the form of ownership. One of the novelties is that homework can be introduced by order of the employer without concluding a written employment contract in the event of an emergency related to a man-made, natural, or other disaster, the threat of an epidemic or pandemic, the need for self-isolation of the employee in cases established by law, and in the event of an armed attack. Before the introduction of homework, but within two days from the date of issue of the order, the employee must familiarize himself with the order.

The authors believe that evidence of such a distinction regarding the approval of the necessary written form of registration of an employment contract on remote work is currently insufficient. The parties to the employment contract may disagree on the practicality of implementing such labor organization structures. Additionally, the authors believe that the definition of the organization of the use of home labor in Art. 601 and Art. 602 of the Labor Code of Ukraine is not entirely clear, especially given the uncertainty about obtaining consent for such a labor organization. For example, the legislation provides that to establish flexible working hours, the employer and the employee must obtain written consent. However, remote or at-home work is exempt from this requirement. Employers can use this loophole to hide the true number of employees ([Kozub, 2021](#)). Although this is a restriction on the rights of the employees themselves, it is also advisable to note that for those who work remotely, an agreement between the employer and the employee is still required, but only if the employee works at the workplace in the property or the premises of the enterprise, institution, organization, or authorized person of the body. Given the above, we can conclude that modern labor organization methods and timely labor legislation updates have made it possible to effectively balance the personal and professional interests of employees during the coronavirus, reduce staff turnover, increase efficiency ratios, and improve job satisfaction ([Vyas, 2022](#)).

Despite the changes, there are still some gaps and issues in the Ukrainian legislation on flexible working that require correction to improve regulation. Even though the law allows remote work, there are legal loopholes when it comes to the process of concluding such employment contracts. In particular, it is not always necessary to reach a formal agreement, which can lead to legal conflicts between employers and employees. In emergencies, the legislation allows businesses to use remote work or flexible hours without a formal agreement. Unofficially altering working conditions without consulting employees can potentially lead to misuse. Despite these challenges, the epidemic-era legislation paved the way for the emergence of a flexible labor model in Ukraine. However, for the successful use of these achievements, additional changes and clarity of the law are required.

A remote working environment requires clear regulations governing workers' rights, in particular working hours, breaks, and the protection of health and safety in the workplace. One persistent problem is the lack of a defined process for resolving disputes arising from flexible schedules or remote work. More regulation is needed on issues such as vacation, paying workers to work outside of office hours, and separating work and personal time. Remote work and flexible work schedules may have clear requirements regarding social guarantees, such as paid sick leave ([Yaroshenko, Lutsenko, Karaulna, Sokolov, & Zubrytsky, 2023](#)). Gaps remain in the current legislation regarding the social protection of these workers.

4. DISCUSSION

In order to fix the problems with Ukraine's laws regarding flexible work arrangements, it is necessary to make clear rules about the legal status of remote work. For example, all types of remote work should be covered by written employment contracts, even in emergency situations. To maintain a balance between business and home life, it is also important to control working hours by setting precise guidelines for working hours and breaks. Social protections such as paid leave, and pension plans offered to workers in typical workplaces should also apply to workers with flexible hours and remote work.

Laws should determine the employer's obligation to reimburse employees for expenses incurred while working at home and provide them with the tools necessary for this. The introduction of flexible working hours can lead to labor conflicts. To resolve these conflicts, it is important to implement effective labor dispute resolution systems, such as simplified employee complaint processes.

Government programs or tax breaks for companies that actively promote flexible working arrangements are a beneficial idea. It is also advisable to offer training programs for employees that will help them adapt to changes in the working environment. By carrying out these actions, it will be possible to eliminate existing legislative loopholes and ensure fairer working conditions for all participants in labor relations. Today, companies around the world use numerous strategies to maintain a balance between work and personal life and change their work schedule, trying to increase productivity and satisfy employees. Adopting a flexible work schedule that promotes productivity and allows employees to work when they feel comfortable is an important first step. Removing the constraints of the standard 9-hour week and giving employees more flexibility over their schedules results in happier employees ([Stasiv, 2021; Yaroshenko, Harashchuk, Moskalenko, Melnychuk, & Burniagina, 2022](#)).

International companies are introducing new technological solutions to ensure the effectiveness of such flexibility. They coordinate projects through online platforms, interact through digital technologies, and track their progress through software. Teams working in different countries or time zones may now be easier to coordinate. However, the main goals of these technological solutions are to ensure efficiency and give employees more choices regarding work schedules. Employees stress levels are reduced, and they remain motivated unless they feel constant observation or pressure to get the job done on time (Bondar & Tsymokha, 2022).

Moreover, many multinationals, following the example of France, have implemented policies that prohibit workers from working after hours. Imposing an official restriction on calls and emails sent after hours is one strategy to protect employees' "personal time" and prevent burnout. Some companies even implement "quiet hours" or weeks without meetings, which allows employees to work without interruption through calls or meetings. In addition, as they realize how important it is for their workers to have excellent mental health, global corporations are providing more and more opportunities for recreation and rehabilitation. Some companies offer additional paid leave or special wellness programs, including sports teams, meditation groups, and counselling services. This encourages emotional balance and prevents burnout, which negatively affects the outcome.

The next significant change was the introduction of a shorter working week. Individual enterprises test a four-day working week without reducing wages. This strategy demonstrates how reducing working hours without compromising quality can sometimes lead to comparable, if not better, results through improved concentration and productivity. Employees work with more enthusiasm because they have more time for family, personal life, and leisure, which increases overall productivity (Rivera, Akanbi, O'Dwyer, & McHugh, 2020).

Next, look at examples of international companies that are changing their working models in several ways to increase productivity and improve work-life balance. One notable example is Microsoft. Employees of the Japanese headquarters tried to shorten the working week in 2019, requiring them to work only four days a week. Production grew by 40%, despite a shorter working day. Employees found that a shorter work week improved their ability to focus on their most important activities as they worked fewer hours. They also had more time to relax and spend with family, which greatly reduced stress levels and increased job satisfaction. Thanks to the success of this experiment, Microsoft decided to explore the possibility of introducing a similar approach in other offices around the world (Mas & Pallais, 2020).

Google has taken another big step toward a flexible working day. It has long supported flexible working hours, giving employees the freedom to choose the start and end of working days to better manage their personal and professional obligations. Google also introduced a policy known as "no appointment weeks," allowing employees to focus on their work without being interrupted with calls and meetings during the week. This policy not only alleviates the stress of constant breaks and meeting obligations but also boosts productivity (Chung & Van der Horst, 2020).

In 2020, Unilever experienced a shortened working week in New Zealand. Although the workers only worked four days a week, they received full pay. His goal was to discover how a shorter working day would affect productivity and overall job satisfaction. The experiment proved successful as employees improved their time management, became more focused, produced a lot, and had more time for family and hobbies. This shows that reducing the working week can still lead to productivity gains without compromising work success.

Another example is Salesforce; after COVID-19, he introduced a new paradigm of work called "Success from everywhere". Employees have full control over how and when they manage their work schedule under this paradigm, allowing them to work from anywhere. Salesforce offers all the requirements for effective work, regardless of whether a person has decided to work remotely or only occasionally visits the workplace. Employees balance their personal and professional lives better when they feel less constrained in the office and freer. Because people can work in comfortable environments and feel more responsible for their work, it also helps the organization increase productivity (Von Gaudecker et al., 2020).

One of the pioneers of the e-commerce sector, Shopify, has also changed its policy on work schedules, allowing employees to work "anywhere" during the pandemic. Since remote work allows employees to manage their time and resources more efficiently, Shopify has made it an integral element of corporate culture. A key component of this strategy was providing workers with the tools and assistance they needed to work productively at home, as well as setting clear expectations about work-life balance. In addition, Shopify stresses the importance of "disconnecting" from work-related activities at the end of the day to prevent exhaustion and overwork, which are common problems among remote workers (Niebuhr et al., 2022).

The German company Siemens also decided to use planning flexibility in the aftermath of the epidemic. As part of the company's new approach to prioritizing results over time spent in the office, Siemens employees are allowed to work at home two to three days a week. Siemens is also making significant investments in digital technologies so that employees can interact effectively from anywhere. With this solution, workers can better manage their schedules and improve productivity while also creating an environment that promotes flexibility and balance (Toniolo-Barrios & Pitt, 2021). These practical examples show how multinational corporations are actively looking for new ways to change work schedules to the requirements of the modern labor market. They work hard to give their employees greater autonomy and flexibility, which promotes work-life balance, productivity, and employee satisfaction.

Ukraine should adopt several useful strategies used by other countries and international companies to change work schedules, which can increase productivity, increase employee happiness, and improve work-life balance. A useful approach that deserves attention is a shorter working week. For example, Microsoft and Unilever are testing a four-day workweek without any pay cut, and the results show it improves worker productivity and reduces stress levels. This strategy can work in some sectors of Ukraine's economy where results can replace long hours. This can increase employee motivation and help them better manage work and personal commitments, which in the long run will increase productivity. Another important element worth borrowing is the policy of "suspension" from work at the end of the working day. Many multinationals, like Siemens, direct employees to limit email and phone communication after hours to avoid overwork. Such policies promote a healthy work-life balance and reduce the risk of burnout. Given the increasingly blurred boundaries between work and home, this is especially true for people who work remotely. This method will increase the welfare of employees and preserve long-term productivity in Ukraine (Maryani, Entang, & Tukiran, 2021).

Focusing on the mental health of workers is another technique worth applying in Ukraine. Numerous global corporations provide mental health support initiatives such as access to psychological counseling, leisure and recreational opportunities, participation in sports, and meditation. As a result, the emotional well-being and stress level of employees decrease, which directly affects their productivity. Ukrainian businesses should implement this strategy, given that employees frequently experience stress, which can exacerbate their productivity. Another important strategy is to optimize the way people work, including reducing the number of

meetings and setting aside time for non-meetings. Google, for example, has introduced 'appointment-free weeks' where people can focus on their work without having to stop talking. This increases productivity and allows people to make better use of their time. Such a strategy should help Ukrainian businesses reduce time losses and increase productivity, especially in cases where a large number of meetings can distract attention from core responsibilities (Angelici & Profeta, 2024).

The acquisition of new technologies that simplify remote work is another important practice that Ukraine should implement. Employees of multinational corporations work efficiently from a distance thanks to the project management, communication, and performance monitoring systems they use. Enterprises in Ukraine, seeking to develop and enter foreign markets, as well as regions with limited office access due to infrastructure problems or other circumstances, will find this particularly useful. Applying these methods at the legislative level, Ukraine will be able to introduce advanced methods of managing work processes, increase business competitiveness, increase labor productivity, and improve the overall well-being of employees.

5. CONCLUSIONS

An important component of productive work is time management. When calculating the duration of working time, specialists take into account the physical and mental qualities of employees, socio-economic considerations, and features of the labor process. Offering flexible working hours and more time for rest can significantly increase employees' productivity and motivation. This allows you to reduce lost working time, as well as increase employee satisfaction and dedication to the organization.

Since COVID-19, there has been a marked shift towards remote and hybrid working, changing traditional methods of allocating and managing time. While flexible schedules make it easier for workers to fulfill their personal and professional obligations, they can also lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout. Time management facilitates the analysis of results, introduces new digital tools, and establishes new norms, such as the flexibility to take time off work to support employees and enhance productivity. Since its introduction in the 1960s, flexible working has gained widespread use globally to enhance time management and productivity.

As a result of the COVID-19 epidemic in recent years, Ukraine has made significant changes to its legislation regulating flexible and remote work. The laws of 2020 and 2021 laid down the legislative framework for flexible working hours and protection of workers' rights. However, there are still many legal loopholes that can lead to legal conflicts, especially when it comes to the need for written contracts and regulation of remote work.

Important for solving problems are the conclusion of written labor contracts, the establishment of clear rules for remote work, social guarantees, restrictions on working time, and the provision of tools that allow employees to work remotely. The introduction of innovative work paradigms, in particular a shorter working week, demonstrates how global corporations such as Unilever and Microsoft increase the level of happiness and productivity of their employees.

Ukraine can take inspiration from this strategy, which involves implementing a shorter work week and enforcing "elimination" rules on evenings and weekends. Additionally, we should prioritize the mental health of our staff to enhance productivity and establish a more harmonious work-life equilibrium. The legal design of these proposals is expected to enhance both business competitiveness and employee welfare.

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The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors' Contributions:

Investigation, resources, software, O.Y.; project administration, writing - original draft, methodology, A.G.; conceptualization, software, validation, A.N.; funding acquisition, visualization, formal analysis, V.T.; writing - review & editing, supervision, data curation, O.L. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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