

PRACTICE DICTATION

Because home is the place of work for teleworkers, ensuring safe and healthy conditions is made more complex for employers. This is difficult/ also for workers who may be carrying out their duties without proper training. The risks in industrial home work are much greater because work-

ers may be handling noxious materials that affect not just their own health but also that of their families. Poor homeworkers are also likely/ to live in cramped and overcrowded housing and may lack a separate workspace to carry out their work. It is possible that they may not be a-

1. min 148 syll/min

ware of or may not have been given the proper equipment needed to carry out their work safely. Even for workers who work from home, governments/ must ensure that employers comply with their duty of care and their obligations to provide, a working environment that is safe and without

risks to physical and mental health.

1. min 30 seconds 83 syll/min

COMPETITION TEXT

SECTION C

Last year as countries across the world imposed lockdowns to impede the spread of the corona pandemic, large portions of the world's workforce found themselves/ working from home. Organizations that had never entertained the possibility of having their staff work from home started to work remotely.

Workers adapted their work and home lives quickly to assume the challenge. The outcome of what has been called the great working from home experiment will/ be the subject of research for years to come, but what is clear is that working from home will undoubtedly take on greater relevance in the future.

1. min 148 syll/min

As we study the shift to working from home for the primarily high-skilled office workers, we should not, however, lose sight of the many other workers who work/ from home on a daily basis, across the world and in a range of occupations. Home work has existed for centuries and continues to be important to-

day. According to International Labor Organizations estimates, prior to the corona crisis, there were approximately a quarter billion/ home-based workers in the world, representing eight per cent of global employment. Within this group of home-based workers there are traditional homeworkers who perform

2. min 164 syll/min

work at home according to the specifications of an employer. Homeworkers include teleworkers who work remotely on a continual basis, but there are also/ a vast number of workers who are involved in the production of goods that cannot be automated, such as electronic assembly. They may also provide such services

as processing insurance claims. Home work exists throughout the world. In high-income countries, it is mainly associated with telework, but there is home work in manufactur/ing in these countries as well. Historically, such industrial home work was prominent in Europe and North America, but the shift of labor-intensive manufactur-

3. min 180 syll/min

ing to the developing world over the past decades took much industrial home work with it. Across the developing world homeworkers can be found at the bottom of global supply chains in/ the apparel, electronics and houseware industries, but they are also prominent in domestic supply chains. Home work in services first emerged in the nineteen-hundred-fifties, with female

typists addressing envelopes, but then spread to other tasks that could be fragmented and outsourced to the home for a wide range of industries, including insurance, banking and tourism. Advances/ in information and communication technologies propelled some employers to experiment with telework, leading to a small but steady share of white-collar teleworkers for whom

4. min 196 syll/min

their home was their place of work. These workers are paid by the task or project and work is carried out according to the specifications of an employer. As the home is the workplace, also gender division/ of labor in the household and its implications for engaging in paid work should be considered. To this day, women across the world are commonly expected to be responsible for the care and mainte-

nance of the household. While men's contribution to unpaid care and maintenance of the household has increased in some countries, the overall gender gap has barely budged. The gap exists in all countries of the world, though/ it is more pronounced in some regions than others. In places where care services are nonexistent or inaccessible, home work presents itself as a viable alternative to paid work outside the home.

5. min 212 syll/min

SECTION B

The lockdowns associated with the corona pandemic have created new interest in the consequences for organizations and their workers of working from home. It is of interest to better understand/ how home work in the services industry has evolved over time and what the potential implications are for enterprises and other organizations. As a matter of fact, homeworkers pay a penalty for not com-

muting to work. One could argue that this penalty is partly justified. Homeworkers do not have to pay for transportation or meals away from home. They can afford to live farther from their job and perhaps pay less rent. On the oth/er hand, they often have to pay for the electricity, machinery or other materials they use for their work. They also have to pay for the workspace in their homes. This is clearly an area in which more research is need-

6. min 231 syll/min

ed before strong conclusions can be drawn. In low and middle-income countries, however, the picture is much clearer. homeworkers work fewer hours and earn less per hour. The gap is attenuated when sex, age, level of education and occu/pation are taken into consideration, but it remains large.

Homeworkers, whether or not they are formally considered employees, should be entitled to social security on equal terms with other workers. Social security, in-

cluding pensions, health care and maternity protection, is limited for homeworkers, which further aggravates their often already precarious employment status. This applies also to sickness benefits, disability benefits,/ employment injury protection and unemployment protection. In some countries, social security for homeworkers has been improved by extending it to homeworkers. Telework has the potential to provide new employment opportuni-

7. min 250 syll/min

ties, not least in countries where in recent generations the supply of university graduates significantly exceeds the number of local jobs that matches their educational level or professional aspirations.

However, homeworkers are/ primarily hired as independent contractors, and while some of them may be legitimately self-employed, in some instances they may be misclassified to avoid employment and social security law obligations. This classification itself is

indicative of the weak link between employers and employees, which is likely to inhibit career prospects for homeworkers. If homeworkers need training to complete their tasks or want to expand the possibilities of what new tasks they can take on, they often/ have to search for this training on their own. Even though homeworkers often are hired exactly because of their special skills, the career opportunities offered by this type of work are the responsibility of homeworkers to pursue. On the other hand, home work in

8. min 269 syll/min

practice opens possibilities for people without formal education to access job functions from which they might otherwise have been excluded from. If the changes brought about by the corona pandemic become permanent and many workers continue to telecommute, the potential negative impacts on training and human capital that result from working from home should be taken into consideration. The corona pandemic has put home work in the limelight as a strategy to prevent mass unemployment. Also, reinforcing tra-

ditional gender roles and problems in training as well as more and irregular working hours, must be weighed against benefits of working from home. One benefit is, for example, the increased ability to balance work with personal responsibilities. The inclusion of provisions calling for equal treatment of homeworkers compared to other workers in the scope of application of general labor legislation does not take the special characteristics of home work into account. For example, those engaged in industrial home work are

9. min 288 syll/min

generally remunerated on a piece-rate basis and there are difficulties with the employer of ensuring compliance with occupational safety and health requirements on workplace design. Moreover, the existence of an employment relationship may be difficult to establish. These are all arguments in favor of the adoption of specific laws and regulations on home work. Furthermore, the adoption of adequate legislative provisions does not mean that homeworkers will effectively receive the protection they need. As has been shown, however, in practice most homework-

ers still face major difficulties in organizing and participating in collective bargaining processes. In addition, homeworkers should benefit from social security protection and should enjoy equal treatment with respect to statutory schemes. Even so, the protection is not effective for those engaged in industrial home work, because many of them work informally and therefore do not receive any protection from labor and social security law. In addition, the lack of effective enforcement of existing legislation perpetuates their informal status.

10. min 307 syll/min

SECTION A

Organizations representing homeworkers and their employers should participate in the design and implementation of the national policy on home work. However, the responsibility to design and enforce laws and policies in support of decent working conditions for homeworkers ultimately rests with governments. These laws and policies must seek to achieve the objective of equal treatment between homeworkers and other wage earners. Sudden increase of telework as a result of the corona pandemic has brought renewed interest in the need for regulatory measures to address issues that are specific to

working from home. Many legislative advances have been made, but implementation remains imperfect and homeworkers remain largely unprotected by law. With respect to industrial home work, there is debate as to whether it is better to include homeworkers within the general scope of employment law or/ to have specific laws or provisions that are applicable to them. These could be complemented with a sector-based or occupational collective agreement. Both approaches may also be combined, provided that the legal definition of homeworkers is broad enough. Regardless of which path is chosen, it is

11. min 328 syll/min

necessary to include provisions covering the different aspects of the protection of homeworkers as well as to undertake efforts to ensure that the law is being applied. Governments should also address the impact of the corona pandemic through the development of appropriate telework policies. Ensuring/ that homeworkers receive appropriate information on their employment and working conditions, in a language that they understand, is crucial. Written contracts should include a reference to the applicable collective agreement, if any, as well as details of the public authority that could provide assistance to homeworkers

in case of need. Employment contracts and other types of written documentation, including registers of homeworkers and work records, are also important to ensure that employers are fully aware of their responsibilities towards homeworkers. Homeworkers should benefit from social security protection, and this may be/ done by extending or adapting existing social security schemes or by developing special schemes for homeworkers. Social protection floors that guarantee at least a basic level of social security to everyone should constitute a fundamental element of national social security systems and are partic-

12. min 349 syll/min

ularly relevant for many homeworkers. There are several solutions for extending coverage to homeworkers. The most straightforward of these is to extend the coverage of existing schemes to homeworkers through changes in labor or social security legislation. This avenue would allow homeworkers to access the same level of social/ security as other employees. Homeworkers would be recognized as employees and their employers would have to pay the same social security contributions on their behalf as for other employees. The difficulties inherent in home work, however, do not simply disappear with a law stating that homeworkers have the same rights as other workers. Long sup-

ply chains still make identifying the employer a difficult task which still makes it hard for the state to enforce these laws. While homeworking is not exclusively female and social protection must also be adequate for the minority of male homeworkers, any social protection scheme that does not consider the impact of gender will risk leaving wom/en unprotected. Women as well as some men have turned to working from home as a means of better reconciling work with care responsibilities. Yet most studies show that women homeworkers work when their children are asleep or are otherwise engaged with other things, because they cannot concentrate on their work and their children at the same time. Women may also ask

13. min 370 syll/min

other family members, perhaps as an eldest daughter or other relative, to look after younger children. They may also involve the children in their work. Paradoxically, this means that childcare is important for homeworkers, just as it is for commuting workers. Unfortunately, access to public childcare is limited throughout the world and data on early childhood education indicates that only half of the world's children are enrolled in pre-primary education. Governments, in cooperation with employers' and workers' organizations, must promote and support programs that provide training to improve homeworkers' non-traditional skills, including leadership and negotiating. Training should be carried out as close as prac-

ticable to the workers' homes. However, providing training for homeworkers continues to be a challenge, since on-the-job training is normally designed for those who work on the employer's premises. Various alternatives exist for increasing homeworkers' access to training, though these depend crucially upon the type of homemaker that needs the training. There are many examples of industrial homeworkers receiving training from their own organizations and the public sector. As usual with on-the-job training, the results are varied, but the crucial result is that providing training to industrial homeworkers is entirely feasible. Tackling the decent work deficits that are present in home work requires efforts on numerous pol-

14. min 391 syll/min

icy fronts. While policy development and implementation is the role of governments, such efforts require collaboration with social partners. With the exception of eliminating child labor, which is a problem associated with industrial home work, all the policy areas that require action are important. Industrial home work and the poverty that often surrounds/ it require concerted policy action on all fronts, beginning with increasing the visibility of the work and extending legal protections. For the large majority of them, it also means ensuring their transition to formal employment relationships. Written contracts are critical, in particular for enforcement. The policy solutions are proven and effective. They just need

to be applied. Nevertheless, there are some policy areas that need attention, such as ensuring that they are presented in understandable language and using data generated from the work to monitor working conditions. Policies are also needed to ensure social protection coverage and access to training for workers. For teleworkers, policymakers should pay most attention to/ ensuring that the law is being applied and to increasing legal awareness among teleworkers. In particular, attention should be given to ensuring equal treatment between homeworkers and similar employees working on employers' premises. Given the potential risks of social isolation, it is necessary to develop actions to address workers' health and safety.

15. min 412 syll/min