Guidelines for Individuals and Communities (Including Research & Scientists) in Confinement amid COVID-19,

A WORKING FROM HOME PREPARATION KIT

ĐIỀU KIỆN XÁC NHẬN: Một bộ dụng cụ làm việc tại nhà

TREALAMH ULLMHÚCHÁIN ÓN OBAIR BAILE

ہوم تیاری کٹ سے کام کر

CONDIZIONE DI CONFINAMENTO: Un kit di preparazione a laboro da casa

CONDITION DE CONFINEMENT: Un kit de préparation au travail à domicile

A Pandemic declaration, in terms of the World Health Organisation (WHO), involves two main criteria, first the propagation of a disease in more than one continent and secondly the number of identified cases that are not imported but result from local transmission. In a pandemic, if the virus is known, it is expected that there would be procedures in place that are part of existing health protocol(s) for specific areas. Those procedures are studied and defined based on their impact on society and the number of identified cases.

In a pandemic where the disease is new and the way to control it is not known, such as the way we are currently living with COVID-19, the advances from scientific communities and also the experts teams will lead the creation of procedures. Other individuals with their experiences and the support of the defined methods will drive the creation of future recommendations. However it is important to understand that the long term action protocols and procedures need to be created and then actioned with the evolution of the pandemic in order to identify what are the best practices. Social distancing along with Working from Home are two procedures largely used world-wide during the COVID-19 pandemic, also limiting the number of participants in group meetings and public events and the reduction of commercial activity have been largely implemented. Confinement at home is in fact an effective procedure that is used to stop pandemics, however as a consequence of the confinement the effects on individuals, the community and the economy are not always positive especially if the confinement is long and very restrictive.

Experts in sociology, professionals in human behaviour and formal studies in human psychology can help to define and understand human thinking and human reactions and when applicable advice using medical procedures. However conditions of confinement under high levels of uncertainty are unique situations and combining them with work activities in order to be productive leads to very complex scenarios. Under these circumstances, where no well-defined procedures exist, it is normal to think that everybody is experimenting and implementing their own method(s). Under these circumstances it is not difficult to imagine a solution where everybody can describe their own way of work and collectively contribute to find a common way to preserve health, maintain family priorities and increase productivity for the duration of the confinement.

We are addressing in this short document, using multiple views and based on experiences, the first and only question that in confinement circumstances in a pandemic people ask:

"How to manage living with family and at the same time working from home efficiently?"

In the following sections you can find information that can guide you or any other individuals that want to start or prepare themselves to scenarios of working from home, either for recommendation, necessity (i.e. a pandemic outbreak like COVID-19) or by personal initiative. The order they are described and all the activities listed, shall be followed in order to run a successful working from home process. All the collective information presented is the result of active participation of individuals that voluntary provided their experience and we build based on consensus these experiences to share. This information is made available with the objective of sharing experiences, being more effective and making sure that you are prepared for a working from home scenarios and that the working from home conditions don't affect daily activities negatively. The information provided in the form of experiences and recommendations also aims to maintain our interpersonal conditions with family or the people with you are living and sharing common indoor spaces.

101 Working from Home (WFH) Overall Planning:

This section summarise overall recommendations for working from home; working from home is not an easy situation, not only because high levels of professionalism and commitment are required but also because there should be procedures that cover responsibilities and legal implications. In this section we do not touch the procedures and/or legal implications rather it is focused on sharing collective experience(s) from individuals because we are amid a health emergency (i.e. COVID-19) and we all are involved and the Working from Home was not an option. As a side note, we all know not every person can work effectively with little or less supervision, because to WFH it is necessary high discipline, deep skills for organisation, and most important self-motivation and strengths to finish something is started, however there are common recommendations that are evident across the different shared experiences:

- *Plan to have more breaks during working from home, to reduce unexpected things to happen.*
- *Taking decisions based on shared/collective experiences is the most reliable way.*
- *There is no more reliable information than your own knowledge and good criteria while WFH.*
- *Seek for your necessary equipment and gear to settle a comfortable working area*
- *Adopt this procedure to simplify the complexity of working from home, later you adapt it!.*
- *Propose activities schedule thus combining work and family should to be too complicated.*

Daily Plan – 8 hrs. Shift Working from Home

09:00 hrs. is a good starting time, but others starts at 8:00 hrs
- Be washed and ready to start, in normal time have an energetic breakfast now only coffee/tea to be awake.
- We all dress up like any other day going to work, this keep your routing to work. Yes more comfortable clothing not bed clothing, remember you will be on camera at one or many conference calls. Be ready at 09:00 hrs (8:00 hrs)

- We fixed Check-in and Check-out times, individually everybody check in and check out electronically keeping start-end times, if something is extraordinary an email your line manager/supervisor to do your late check-in early check-out is sent and recorded and start scanning emails.

09:15 hrs.
- First things first, we all scan important emails and reply to them shortly and avoid long answers in those emails, we can come back with details later.
- Like anybody else we accumulate work and tasks to do for the next day, during the morning we attend those pending issues, and aim to resolve those before the morning coffee break. It is also to start morning conference calls.

09:45 hrs. Coffee/tea break, family breakfast and play time

The coffee/tea break is now transformed in family breakfast and play time with kids and/or gathering with family or housemates and nobody will take rudeness if we say: "sorry we/I have to come back to work".

10:00 hrs. After the coffee break/breakfast, we start to review the schedule and attend the conference calls. It seems that everybody like to have a last check up of slides and documents before presenting them.
- Time for conferencing, some people prefer to have conference calls in the morning, other people during the afternoon, during COVID-19 everybody is having full day of meetings so there is basically no difference but it is highly recommended to separate virtual meetings (conferencing) work and time to progress on pending activities (afternoons).
- Take your notes and actions to be organised during the afternoon and prepare for other days in the week, you can use any work planner or simply an agenda.

13:00 hrs. Lunch Time
- Everybody is free to sign-off and prepare cooked meals or light lunch
- See real experiences on the **lessons learnt and best practices section**.
- A short walk not longer than 15 minutes with kids and/or partner is possible.

14:00 hrs.
- Back to work and finalise conferencing and start the preparation for activities and working in pending issues and/or new activities form the conferences.

14:30 hrs.
- Full speed on activities or afternoon conferences (depends of the weekday)
- We all agree it is advisable to stop conferencing before 15:00 hrs

15:30 hrs. Afternoon coffee/tea break is now Family Time otherwise a walk.
- The afternoon coffee/tea break is family time and play time with kids and/or family or housemates, we all found interesting how re-charging is knowing that family is there and it is also easier to come back to work when family understand it is time to do so. Especially little ones who it seem supporting the back to work situation after a short walk of maximum 30 minutes.

16:30 hrs.
- The activities and pending work continues and a double look at emails to do not miss anything important. Scanning this time can be more detailed as during daytime there is more emails arrival, thus we need more time for doing this.
- Preparatives for the next day starts, Maybe everybody will work overtime, but we all agree that at this time having a summary of the activities will help to do not forget important things.

17:00 hrs.

- It is time to check out electronically, unless the work extends but it should not be more than 18:30 hrs.
- Between 17:00 and 18:30 hrs only pending activities and preparation for next day activities must be done, otherwise the workload could not be balanced and carry out form day to day.
19:00 hrs. Dinner Time
- See real experiences in **lessons learnt and best practices section**.

Weekly Activities - Monday to Friday

Weekly progress is important to visualise work done and also identify gaps. Beyond the WFH daily activities there is a set of recommended fix actions:

Monday
- Monday is a good day for planning activities, you will have the rest of the week to catch up with comments and implement the provided feedback.
- Monday is a preparation day for reporting the overall achievements.
  Allocate 30 minutes of your time before the end of the day to this activity.

Tuesday
- Weekly assembly team meeting, An hour meeting is scheduled.
  Tuesday from 16:00-17:00 hrs. fixed time is a good day to report overall achievements and catch-up with activities progress.
- A meeting for relevant information and official communicates on the situation.
- A day for providing a view of the current week plan
- An online plan tracking tool is implemented,
  Everybody can access it and update weekly plans and activity details.
- An online conference system is used.

Wednesday
- Catchup Day, the day before you reported progress and received feedback.
  allocate this day for clarifications and follow ups or simply to confirm all is clear on your duties and activities.
  Allocate 30 minutes of your time before the end of the day to this activity.

Thursday
- Training Day, allocate this day for training sessions, online webinars or simply an activity that keeps you active and professionally improving every week.
  Allocate 60 minutes of your time before the end of the day to this activity.

Friday
- Weekly Socialising Virtual Meeting, an hour meeting is scheduled.
  Friday from 16:30-17:30 hrs. fixed time is a good day to distract your mind.
- A day for brainstorming, open discussions, catch up on health issues, concerns or simply informative sessions in a distress environment or conversation tone
- An online conference system is used.

Monthly Overview

Week 1
- A monthly meeting is organised to asses not only work and individuals progress but also to know the group/mid-long term plans and set new goals.
  A meeting in the first week of the starting month is recommended.

Lessons learnt and best practices:

This section describes collective experiences built on consensus and the voluntary participation of individuals to describe experiences and build, based on consensus, lessons learnt and best practices. The different lessons learnt are described in first person to transport the situation onto individuals, however all of them are build based on collective real experiences. Any personification or profiling have been avoided in order to have general characteristics that can be used by any individual interested in understanding the 101 Working from Home overall plan and thus it can be adapted and used easily in other situations.

I have to move office equipment to continue my work at home.

Working from home has many implications and not always are positives, while many people like working from home because the gain the possibility to combine their personal live with work, others simply prefer to have a specific space assigned to work separating their working from personal lives.

During health emergencies like COVID-19 and particularly if confined conditions are in place the most important is to re-create a working space as close to the one you feel comfortable to perform your work efficiently. Taking into consideration that in confinement conditions many shops will close and online shopping will be overwhelmed. The following is a checklist to be followed when moving equipment from office to continue work from home.
 • Identify the equipment/material you may need while working from home and create a list.
 • Verify the equipment works 100% and there is no missing or broken dangerous parts.
 • Communicate this list with your line manager and/or investigate the procedures.
 • Complete the authorisation form to take the equipment to your place.
 • Seek for transportation and help, never move equipment without adequate instructions.

I have no other option than using my own bedroom as a working space

If you are one of those lucky people who live in a large house where you have a spare room that can be used or transformed into working space, congratulations, you have the first step forward to a successful working from home adaptation process. However if you have to use your own bedroom or other shared space, what it is described as follows perhaps can help you.

You can create the workspace having the following basic furniture in place:
 • A standard size desk for a laptop,
 • A comfortable normal size chair, avoid those ones that can make you sleep on them.
 • An external screen, and a desk lamp, this is not necessary sometimes,
 • A stand with a Kinect device on top or a Camera for video conferencing and
 • A set of speakers, noise-reduction headphones and a unidirectional microphone,
 • The extension cord with all the outlets.

The use of a labelling method to differentiate the bedroom from a working space is highly recommended, An Office and a Bedroom billboard or display as a matter of a psychological game will help you to avoid laying down on the bed when working or during a break. Also both help you when coming back to the bedroom from lunch or coffee breaks or walks, because you can look at the bedroom as a working space rather than your bedroom.
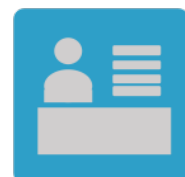
The desk ideally should not be straight in front of a window which can create distractions but advisable is that the natural light still keeps the working area well illuminated, which is important for a good energetic and motivated day.

Daily routine during confinement (weekday) – Experience (Single living)

I am not an early bird person but, neither an owl that works overnights, I usually work normal daylight time. I usually wake up around 8.30 am when the sun is not out using an alarm clock or 7.30-8:00 hrs in summertime if there is a shining sun outside. Let's start the day...

Stretching,
 • A little bit of exercise in the morning before a shower is always motivating, do not exercise to the point of sweeting, it is just to starting the day.
 • Do not forget that opening the window(s) let the heat and smells out after exercising.

Breakfast
 • Prepare your favourite morning drink, fresh smoothie, coffee, chocolate, indulge yourself a little bit just starting the day to keep your mood up.
 • Morning ablutions and reflections before starting the work.

Working Starts (*)
 • Sit at my desk, like entering to the office, check in and start working (9-10 am)
 • Do my daily check in, an activity that also helped me to start my working mood every day
 • 15 minutes coffee break around 11.30 am
 • Work until lunch time (between 13:00 hrs – 14:00 hrs)

Lunch
 • Something not as heavy lunch but a sandwich or pasta with vegetables and fruits.
 • Lunch can go with or without a chat with housemates
 • A 15 minutes walk outside or in the back garden to allow digestion.
 • Back to work
 • Tea break around 4 o'clock (15 minutes)
 • End of working day between 17:00 hrs. to 17:30 hrs.
 (*) Observe *The 101 Working from Home (WFH) Overall Planning* for more details.

Dinner
 • Cooking, eating, cleaning and socialising with housemates until 21:00 hrs
 • My own time, watch videos or play games (1-2 hours)

Reflexion(s)
 • Think on what went well, what can be improved and what I can do better tomorrow
Sleeping time

Some work may also take place at the weekends if the progress is judged not satisfactory or if I am too bored but usually it is preferable to dedicate weekends on personal projects, hobbies, gardening or fixing house hardware.

Daily routine during confinement (weekday) – Experience (Married living with Family)

The COVID-19 confinement has changed the way I usually organise my days, I wake up late now, around 9.30 AM in the morning as compared to normal routine because before I used to wake up at 7.30 hrs as I usually drop my daughter at school.

Playing,
After waking up these days I play a little bit with my daughter,
nothing compare with some energetic start with kid(s); thus the day starts…

Breakfast
• I have breakfast with my family.
• We do prepare a heavy breakfast as we do in normal routine as well
  (fried eggs with butter bread and a cup of tea).
• This first family time session makes the kid(s) happy and calm and makes us happy.

Working Starts (*)
• I work at a dedicated small room dedicated to office work.
• I use a room sign to avoid disturbance (red do not disturb, yellow proceed with caution).
  this way also small kids can follow the importance of staying away from the room.
• I read my emails and reply to urgent pending messages and then work on planned tasks.
• I do work in small sessions (1-2 hours) unlike normal routine and I take a short break after
  each session of work and in the break (I drink tea with the family as they need more time
  from me as compared to normal routine.).
 • I play with my kid(s), if I don't play then it's difficult to start my next session of work
   peacefully otherwise interruptions/disturbances will happen.

Lunch
• The lunch is usually something light and is taken at one of the breaks
• I eat light food like a sandwich, fruits & snacks and take tea in these breaks as well
• There is no restriction policy with my family to enter the room before and after lunch,
  particularly with kid(s), however the colour code at the door helps in a way that my kid(s)
  does not get anxious about what I am doing in the room.
• Back to work
• As the confinement is getting prolonged and the weather is getting better, at the coffee
  break in the afternoon (all family) also go out for a short walk (15:00 min) almost daily
 • End of working day between 17:00 hrs. to 17:30 hrs.
(*) Observe *The 101 Working from Home (WFH) Overall Planning* for more details.

Dinner
• Dinner is a time for family again to reuse and prepare hot meal together, usually meat,
  vegetables, rice or pasta and tea
• Cooking, eating, cleaning and playing with kid(s) until 22:00 hrs

Reflexions
 • Think on what went well, what can be improved and what I can do better tomorrow

Sleeping Time

Alternatively, even if I have a spare room for a workplace, eventually I work in one of our bedrooms because there is a nice and wide built-in desk made for work. I have set up a big

screen and my laptop, notebook etc. and for some reason there is a faster connection, broadband in that room. I also have a more comfortable chair in that room. That's why I change my location now and then between bed and chair. Also good daylight comes into the room through the windows, I like working in good natural daylight, in the spare room there is less light. Space is not as big, but it is more than enough for setting up my work equipment.

Q&A during COVID-19 that everyone want answers

In a Pandemic outbreak some questions of general interest arise, what happened at the individual level? Is it possible to adapt rapidly and efficiently to those changes and conditions generated from a pandemic outbreak? How an individual and particularly one from the research and scientific community will be affected? and most importantly how to be better prepared? The answer to those questions is typically addressed in a variety of ways and depending on the circumstances and preferences of each individual sooner or later everybody ends up confused and trying to adapt to conditions and restrictions in the best possible way.

- Too much information, what to do?

The lack of scientific analysis or at least reliable evidence about the reason(s) that generated a health emergency i.e. pandemic outbreak, epidemic or pandemic always work negatively. Any individual willing to go successfully into a working from home process, first of all shall understand the situation, this means add and consider all the context in relation to what is known from previous experiences and what are the previous measures that were taken as a result to alleviate the effects of a health break rather than early stage explanations.

- What do you do every day?

I am trying to keep my daily working schedule as it was but now in combination with home-related activities i.e. cooking with my partner/wife and also taking care of my kid(s), I prioritise family issues, something that has been always like that at home and now with confinement it is well understood when running meetings or having a conference call with working colleagues.

- How does your routine from Monday to Friday look like now?

My date usually started between 8am and 9am, and of course, with a cup of my favourite coffee on my desk. The first thing to do is checking my email(s), answering them and other messages. Next, I will attend all the meetings that are related to my current working project(s). It is interesting that all the meetings are now being held online and all the participants are working from home. Such experience does not happen every day.

I usually take a break at 11h30 am if there is no meeting or urgent task during that time. I play with my kid(s) or take them outside for a short walk (30 minutes max.) around my living area. I will then come back to work after that. It is worth mentioning that most of my time is spent on researching, writing and implementing software.

- What do you eat for your daily meals?

Usually not a light breakfast, but a rich one in carbohydrates and proteins for example bread with egg, some vegetables and Juice, my Lunch is light, a sandwich with cheese and ham and a fruit and my Dinner is an elaborated cooked meal.

- What activities do you do to get concentrated?

In this COVID-19 confinement and thus working from home I found that an activity that helps me to get concentrated is having a time for distraction, my mind got concerned about Pandemic and found that my breaks converted in playing with my kid(s) and eventually short outside walk (max 30 Min). After that, I feel having more energy and being more productive when coming back to work. Perhaps energy from my kids keeps me going ahead with work.

- Is your working space separated from the sharing spaces at home?

I am lucky that my house has a spare room that becomes now my working home-office, the room is actually a single room that has enough space for a computer desk, an office chair. I have a big monitor that is connected to my laptop. The internet connection is also set. A surround speaker is also available.

- Do you have enough light and space in your working space?

My working space is closed to a medium size window and I also have an office light. Even my working space is not as big as the one at work, I am very happy because I have natural light entering my working space that keeps me motivated.

- How many hours per day do you dedicate to work and for yourself?

Usually 8-9 hours. However, I dedicate more time when I feel that I was disturbed more by kids on a particular day.

- What activities do you do to not get distracted?

If my partner/wife and kids are busy in their hubbies or activities, I don't get too much disturbance. Otherwise, I need to close the door and set a letter with a symbol of do not disturb when I need to get really concentrated and focus (e.g., coding, writing). I found this is a good way to also create a game (playing) atmosphere with my kid(s).

Final Comments

- Health emergencies will generate individual anxiety, social instability and economic effects, It is the responsibility of every member of the society actively follow recommendations and procedures from official sources with the objective to get accurate information.

- It is important to engage in the official activities and prioritise health-related ones taking always into consideration that any other activities will have an impact and that also the economy will be affected.

- To minimise the effects of a health emergency, not everybody has to get involved in front

line activities, but try to keep a positive attitude and find your role and responsibilities.

• Groups and communities that are dependent of caregivers and health systems are in first line to get services to maintain routines, promote activity and get their meal.

• Socially distancing is a practice that is important to exercise not only during the initial phases of COVID-19 emergency health but also during the de-escalation phase in order to prevent new health outbreaks.

• Remaining socially connected will reduce the negative mental health effects of isolation or Confinement.

• It is important to follow a procedure for self-quarantine when symptoms appear and follow basic procedures for isolation in order to protect not only our health but others.

• Mental health is equally important and need proper attention as the effects in a pandemic where high levels of stress and anxiety are present.

• Confinement as result of a health alerts is a procedure to alleviate and stop the effect of spread of virus or a disease in a health outbreak, as result of this working from home schemes and procedures are necessary to be defined and take place.

• The use of a methodology for confinement defining clear steps as check points for working from home conditions is important particularly to minimize the effects of social distancing, and also the negative impacts on health and work productivity.

Disclaimer and Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the scientific community and active researchers for their participation and inputs provided to create and validate this document alike the feedback received. The main purpose of this document is to be used as support for going into the process of Working from Home and eventually every individual with the correct understanding and application of normal criteria adapts your own methodology based on **The 7 Key Confinement Process Guidelines** introduced and explained previously. We provide this information for free distribution under a creative commons licence with no liability or responsibility of any type towards its authors and with the clear understanding that its content and ideas can be extended, modified, altered.

Authors acknowledge the support from European Commission under H2020 Programme and particularly ACTIVAGE project, i3-MARKET project and NGI Explorer projects. It is important to highlight that any official information and recommendations provided from official sources must be followed and this document does not interfere or surpass any official information provided by any of the health institutions, organisations or governmental authorities in your country, state or your local area.

About the authors:

Dr. Martin Serrano
Principal Investigator and Team Leader

Dr. Achille Zappa
H2020 ACTIVAGE Project Manager

Yasar Khan
H2020 ACTIVAGE Research Assistant

Dr. Hoan Quoc Nguyen
H2020 i3-MARKET Project Manager

Qaiser Mehmood
H2020 i3-MARKET Research Assistant

Nial O'Brolchain
Interreg CarePeat Project Manager

Alex Acquier
Insight Centre for Data Analytics MSc Student

Internet of Things and Intelligent Systems
NUIGalway - Data Science Institute
Insight Centre for Data Analytics

April 2020