Offers of remote working in German job ads have more than tripled during coronavirus pandemic

The number of online job advertisements that present applicants with an option to work from home has risen to 12 percent in Germany in 2021. The amount has thus more than tripled compared to 2019. The ifo Institute and the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (KU) have come to this conclusion after the analysis of 35 million job advertisements.

“The increase in home-based jobs in job advertisements is evident across all sectors of the economy. The increase was strongest in occupations where the potential of home offices was largely unused before the pandemic,” explain ifo researcher Jean-Victor Alipour and Christina Langer, research assistant at the KU’s Chair of Macroeconomics. According to the study, rural regions are also catching up significantly in this respect: For example, the regional disparity between urban and rural areas fell by about 30 percent between 2019 and 2020.

Companies that enable working from home in particular are more likely to fill their vacancies with employees who possess digital competencies, as well as adaptability and the ability to work in a team. “Our findings clearly show that companies are increasingly organizing their workflow toward virtual home offices. Shifting work to employees’ homes eliminates well-rehearsed processes, both in the social context and in the organization of the workflow itself. This is reflected in the skills that companies are looking for,” says KU researcher Christina Langer.

For example, basic computer skills are required almost twice as often in job ads with an option for working from home (43 percent) as in job ads that do not mention this possibility (22 percent). Skills such as adaptability to change (79 percent compared to 66 percent) and teamwork skills (63 percent compared to 54 percent) also gain importance in home office jobs.

“The ‘home office shock’ has broken down traditional work organization in many places. And it is becoming increasingly clear that the experience of the pandemic will have a lasting impact on the world of work,” Alipour and Langer say. The decisive factor for the future of the home-based office will be whether companies are willing and have the capacity to successfully adapt their management methods to a workforce that is working in hybrid structures. It is unlikely that mere investments in digital infrastructure will be enough to do the trick.

The study is based on more than 35 million job postings in the period from January 2014 to March 2021. For this purpose, the websites of over 200 companies and all relevant internet job boards in Germany were searched for job advertisements. The data was collected by the U.S. company Emsi Burning Glass, which specializes in labor market analyses.

The detailed article (in German) “Wird uns das Homeoffice erhalten bleiben? Ein Blick in 35 Millionen Stellenanzeigen” (Will the home office stay with us? Looking into 35 million job ads) can be found at ifo Schnelldienst 9/2021 (www.ifo.de/publikationen/2021/aufsatz-zeitschrift/wird-uns-das-homeoffice-erhalten-bleiben-ein-blick-35).
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