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**Economic Commission for Europe****Conference of European Statisticians****Seventieth plenary session**

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Item 8 (c) of the provisional agenda

**Topics of common interest to statistical and geospatial communities –  
joint session with the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial  
Information Management for Europe (UN-GGIM: Europe)****Future work and future workplace – post-Covid 19 working modalities****Shifts in the post-pandemic organization culture, ensuring a  
human-centred approach****Prepared by Colombia (DANE)***Summary*

The document provides an overview of the shifts in the organizational culture in the national statistical office of Colombia (DANE) ensuring a human-centered approach. DANE has gradually modified its vision as a statistical office from “Strategic information” to “Information for all”. This external change has implied a transition towards the adoption of a people-based organizational culture. The COVID-19 pandemic was a challenge but also an opportunity to implement teleworking in the entity. This modality is demonstrating benefits in the improvement of the quality of life of the employees, productivity and the reduction of long commutes, contributing to the welfare of DANE’s employees, but also the creation of mechanisms for engaging with the staff regarding their perceptions of the work environment and quality of life.

The document is presented to the Conference of European Statisticians’ session “Future work and future workplace – post-Covid 19 working modalities” for discussion.



## I. Introduction

1. Official statistics are more about people than data. From the birth of the official statistics community, we have focused our efforts towards improving methodologies, adhering to ethical and scientific standards, as well as ensuring the quality of the statistics we produce. However, along the way, as we have advanced in the strengthening of statistical knowledge, we have realized that our purpose is to provide relevant information to our users.
2. Such an approach has been adopted at an accelerated pace for more than two decades. With the arrival of the Millennium Development Goals and now the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, emphasis on statistical production has shifted its focus to people's information needs, in particular those of vulnerable populations. As a result, the need to deepen approaches of inclusion and equity in official statistics has been highlighted, empowering individuals who traditionally lack visibility in the information that we produce.
3. Nevertheless, this change of paradigm not only involves a commitment to statistical operations. An approach of inclusion and equity with people at its core must permeate all statistical dimensions, including the personnel responsible for producing them. As of 2018, DANE has gradually modified its vision as a statistical office. As the leading entity of the NSS, our slogan changed from "Strategic information" to "Information for all", precisely because it is our firm belief that people should be the focus point of our tasks. This external change, has also implied some changes within the organization, ensuring a transition towards the adoption of a people-based organizational culture, by focusing our efforts on integrating this inclusive approach into DANE's day-to-day activities.
4. The above aligns with the Integrated Planning and Management Model MIPG of the Colombian Government, as an effort to devise a system that guides public servants in the exercise of the institutional management and that, amongst other objectives, aims to improve leadership and human talent. The model puts people at its core to ensure that human talent contributes to the fulfillment of the institution's mission as well as the State's goals by means of integrity, relevance, commitment and transparency.
5. With the pandemic, it was necessary to accelerate the process. While continuity of statistical operations was paramount for DANE, an approach based on the needs of its staff led us to consider mobility restrictions as a way of accelerating desired institutional changes. The planning of the various activities to be carried out within the framework of strategic management of Human Talent in 2020 involved implementing human resource management plans in a virtual manner. These plans included the Annual Vacancy Plan, the Human Resources Forecast Plan, the Institutional Training Plan (PIC), the Social Welfare and Incentives Plan, and the Occupational Health and Safety Plan. As such, this document seeks to highlight key actions that were adopted since 2020, that sought to take advantage of the window of opportunity provided by the pandemic, to provide lasting change in the institution's organizational culture.

## II. Virtuality, culture and inclusion

6. One of the important things to take into consideration before going into the specific actions that were adopted, is to recognize what modalities of work does the Colombian legislation recognize, as it is from this base that DANE understood the scope of action regarding the promotion of a people centered organizational culture.
  - **Telework (*Teletrabajo*):** it consists of the performance of paid activities, or provision of services to third parties using information and communication technologies for contact between the worker and the company, without requiring the worker's physical presence at a specific working site. There are three types of contracts: 1) supplementary, when the contract stipulates that the performance of tasks is performed both in person and remotely; 2) autonomous, when the worker performs the tasks of his contract at a site designated by him; and 3) mobile, when the worker's activities are not carried out at a permanent location. This work modality differs from work from home due to its own regulation, which establishes the number of days of

telework per week and is exclusively carried out through information and communication technologies.

- **Work at home** (*Trabajo en casa*): The term “work at home” is defined as the authorization for civil servants to temporarily perform their functions or work activities outside the place where they usually perform them, without modifying the nature of the contract nor the contract itself. It is important to highlight that this specific modality can be carried out, only when occasional, exceptional or special circumstances occur that prevent the worker from performing their duties at their place of work, favoring the use of information technology and communications.
- **Remote work:** Law 2121 (3 August 2021), incorporated a new work modality into the private sector in the Colombian system, as well as conditions for its promotion. This new modality is to be agreed on a voluntary basis by the parties and may be developed using existing and new technologies, or other means or mechanisms that allow exercising the contracted work remotely. However, this type of work does not contemplate its implementation in public institutions and therefore it is not feasible to implement it in the entity.

7. Moreover, at this stage, it is important to emphasize that one of the biggest barriers that DANE faced during the period prior the pandemic, was the perception of the employees regarding their working conditions, as they were affected by a complex situation regarding commuting in Colombia, particularly in Bogota. Bogotá ranks high across several indexes measuring commuting time: in 2019 the city’s inhabitants lost in average 191 hours commuting (Kopf, 2020). This trend is consistent with the country’s high commuting average time, 60.6 minutes per day, compared to the OECD’s 30.46 minutes per day (OECD, 2021). Nevertheless, despite this commuting time the evolution to more flexible work schemes before the pandemic was limited by some perceptions regarding the productivity of employees when they were not working at the office.

## A. The implementation of teleworking at DANE

8. DANE, committed to the welfare of its staff, evidenced the possibility of implementing teleworking initially considering those people with special health conditions that required it. Since 2017 DANE has been implementing teleworking and the first beneficiaries were 2 staff members that had a special health condition. In the year 2018 with the Change of Government and a new administration in DANE, the general director and his management team promoted teleworking and its nationwide coverage in the entity. To achieve this, we had the advice of the Ministry of Labor (MinTrabajo by its acronym in Spanish) and the Ministry of Information and Communications Technologies (MinTIC by its acronym in Spanish), for the implementation of a pilot test.

9. From the results of the pilot, the institution concluded that having as an objective the welfare of the entity’s employees, it was necessary to promote this type of work to improve the quality of life of DANE’s employees. For this purpose, a new resolution was created on Teleworking, which consolidated the experience of the pilot test and the recommendations issued in the white paper on teleworking published by the MinTIC. As a result, for the period 2018-2019 we went from 4 to 20 teleworkers.

10. With the arrival of the pandemic, it became obvious that we had to promote telework as a modality that would last in the long term. From the lessons learned during mobility restriction measures, based on virtual training and prioritization criteria that demonstrated that most of the functions could be fulfilled remotely and not only those related to technical and professional work, it was also decided to implement new regulations in the organization with Resolution 341 of 2021.

11. As of May 2022, there are 89 teleworkers in the DANE, 74 of which belong to the central level and 15 to the regional branches throughout the country. In addition, there are about 45 requests from new employees who wish to become teleworkers. In accordance with the importance that the encouragement of teleworking as part of the organizational culture of DANE has had, the promotion strategy and the applications of workers are handled by top

management by DANE’s the Teleworking Committee. This Committee is composed by DANE’s director, the human resources office, the general secretariat, and the legal office, among others.

**B. Work environment**

12. One of the most important elements in the management of Human Talent in organizations is the work climate. Nevertheless, one of its associated challenges is its periodic measurement to guarantee efficient monitoring and the adoption of appropriate follow-up actions. The Colombian legislation stipulates that the measurement of labor environment in public entities should be taken every 2 years; aware of this situation recognized the opportunity in contributing to this effort, to provide the evidence for decision makers in all the executive branch regarding the management of the work environment in their institutions. As such, the Institutional Environment and Design Survey (EDI by its acronym in Spanish) was redesigned to be carried out every two years - in accordance with the law, and to be used as an information source on the work environment. For this purpose, in 2020, technical roundtables were held between DANE, the Administrative Department of the Civil Service, and the National Planning Department to revise and adjust the survey questionnaire.

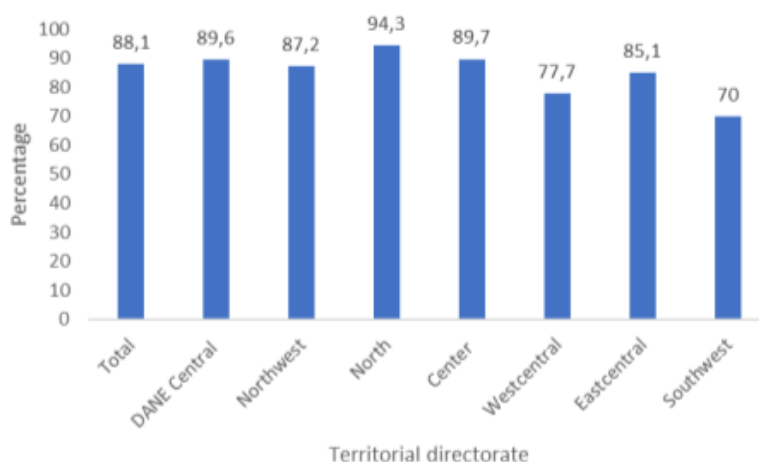
13. Between December 1 and 18, 2020, the EDI pilot was implemented through a web application provided by DANE. The most important findings include that only 18% of DANE’s workforce found it difficult to adapt to home-based work arrangements. Conversely, 70% of the workers stated that they were able to maintain a work-life balance and only 35.4% stated that they had difficulties in fulfilling family responsibilities due to the time they dedicated to work. Reducing the time spent commuting, among other reasons, allowed workers to make better use of their time without affecting their work performance.

14. Even though the employees were primarily working virtually, 91.1% agreed they had the necessary competencies to perform their jobs. A total of 88.1% considered their activities were in line with their job functions and 84.4% stated they contributed to their professional growth.

15. Another significant result evidenced that in general DANE employees feel happy with their work, as can be seen in Graph 1. On average, 88.1% of DANE employees agree with the statement "I feel happy to work in this institution". This trend is particularly high for the Northern Territorial Directorate, with 94.3%, and low for the Central West and South-West Directorates with 77.7% and 70%, respectively.

Figure 1.

**Percentage of public servants that agreed with the statement: “I am happy to work in this institution”**



16. The EDI’s pilot results found that, in terms of use of technological tools for the performance of their duties, 94.0% of the servers reported using a remote VPN connection and 91.3% used video-calling applications to perform their work functions. In terms of devices used, 69.3% used a desktop computer, 60.3% used a smartphone, 59.3% used a

laptop, and 4.9% used a tablet. In 2021, a new EDI survey was carried out, with the results to be published on the 7th of June<sup>1</sup>, allowing to have a comparison on how the situation of the work environment during the pandemic was, and adopt significant actions, that allow different innovations to be reviewed based on their results.

### **C. Strategic Human Talent Management Plan**

17. The pandemic became a challenge for the development of the Strategic Plan for Human Talent Management, but it also became an opportunity to carry out training, welfare, job provision, occupational health and safety trainings, among others, using information and communication technologies. Since 2020, we started carrying out these activities virtually and on a national level, facilitating not only the massive connection of the institution's workers, but also enabling an increase in the number of participants and the possibility of reaching all DANE's territorial offices with the same content in a synchronous manner.

18. Among the results obtained through the Self-Report on Ergonomics and Mental Health Conditions, the main benefits of remote work with the aid of ICTs were identified as a decrease in commuting time, followed by prevention of contagion, higher productivity, and increased concentration. Among the most prominent difficulties evidenced were a more sedentary life and having additional roles at home. Some people also stated that it was difficult for them to work collaboratively online.

19. In the development of the activities framed in the Strategic Plan for Human Talent Management (SPHTM), among others, the implementation of a leadership program aimed for managerial positions stands out. The main objective of the leadership program is to provide people in charge of personnel with the tools needed to strengthen leadership and management, thus improving the relationship with their work teams and contributing to the strengthening of the work environment. This activity was carried out jointly by the welfare and occupational health and safety units.

20. As stated before, the virtuality allowed for a more engaged participation from DANE's workers, another specific example relates to the Institutional Training Plan (PIC), in which we went from having groups of 30 employees participating to more than 100 in different sessions. The same happened with the welfare and occupational health and safety activities. One of the most relevant topics within the framework of the PIC was the development of the welcoming and training sessions for new workers in a virtual modality. This tool enables employees to learn more about the organization to get acquainted with their jobs and, at the same time, to have permanent access to information, which has allowed us to promote the organizational culture through tools that are easily accessible from the moment they become part of the NSO's workforce.

21. Finally, it should be noted that in the past activities within the framework of occupational health and safety were seen by workers as merely meeting the requirements of the management system. However, since the pandemic, this topic has become increasingly relevant for all employees of the entity and a constant updating process of biosafety protocols has been carried out to safeguard the health of all employees, including those working at home or teleworking. COVID cases have also been permanently monitored, and mental health, physical health and ergonomic conditions have been promoted.

## **III. Work ahead: Institutional effectiveness in a regulated space**

22. With the support of the Ministry of Information Technologies and Communications and the Ministry of Labor, DANE has promoted and supported the implementation of teleworking in the entity. This modality is demonstrating benefits in the improvement of the quality of life of the employees, productivity and the reduction of long commutes, contributing not only to the welfare of DANE's employees, but also of the rest of the

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<sup>1</sup> An additional section, analyzing the results of the EDI to be published on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June, will be included for the presentation on the session.

population through the reduction of commuting times, and the creation of creating scenarios and mechanisms for engaging with the staff regarding their perceptions of the work environment and quality of life.

23. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that work culture in Colombia was severely impacted with the pandemic as it made institutions adopt specific actions which were in direct conflict with certain stereotypes associated with how an employee carries out his functions. An example of this can be drawn from the number of teleworking staff in the institution, starting with a pilot of just four employees, to having 89 as of May 2022, and 45 additional requests, which shows how the employees and their superiors have been able to identify that it is possible for the public service in Colombia to move to more flexible and productive modalities.

24. Moreover, the attendance figures for the different scenarios included in DANE's institutional offer for its employees, increasing considerably, has also allowed to have a more dynamic and diverse engagement with the staff, taking note of their insights and finding ways to address existing concerns, such as mental health and training requirements.

25. Although the sanitary emergency in Colombia still exists, in view of its imminent culmination, DANE is preparing guidelines for the return to on-site work. Based on the lessons learned during the pandemic, we are committed to continue the promotion of teleworking and its assessment, always considering the needs of our workers. Nevertheless, we are also evaluating the new biosecurity protocols needed for the massive return of workers to DANE's facilities.

26. Among the proposals being evaluated is the return of the technical teams in phases to evaluate biosafety needs. The prevalence of virtual meetings and mixed work is a challenge for the organization in terms of the technology needed, the organizational culture that must now adapt to more time spent on-site, and the coordination of teams that are not all teleworking or working in DANE's premises. Additionally, the new culture must respond to the guidelines given by the national government, as we face a change of government that implies a new leadership in the institution.

27. For DANE, it is a priority to continue with a people-centered approach to organizational culture. In this sense, although the path we wish to take towards the culmination of the health emergency is not yet fully determined, we will continue to promote the development of human talent as the center of institutional planning and management.

## IV. References

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