



Dr Christian Schünemann preparing for his assignment at home and at a manufacturer of dog and cat food in the Uzbek capital Tashkent

Online, hybrid, in-person

International assignments today increasingly involve a 'remote component'

Letter post, fax and telephone: these were the common means of communication when we prepared our first international assignments in 1983. Today, of course, the world looks very different. All our processes have long since been digitised, and this also applies, at least in part, to our assignments.

There has been a significant increase in the number of experts who, in the run-up to an assignment abroad, use video calls or emails to get to know the people in charge at the location of the upcoming project and communicate with them in advance. The same applies to the period after the actual assignment: it goes without saying that our experts are also happy to provide information from home after their activities on site, using the tools commonly available today.

Thus, many of our assignments now have a certain 'hybrid touch' or 'remote component', even those that ultimately take place in person. In addition, how-

ever, there are purely online assignments – a relic from the pandemic, when travel was restricted.

Even back then, it was clear that not every topic can be dealt with in a virtual space, but some certainly can – and quite effectively. We have incorporated our learnings into a list of criteria for online assignments, which we take a closer look at in this issue of SES today.

How often are our experts actually 'online', what needs to be taken into account, and where are the limits of a remote assignment? In response to numerous requests, we want to explore questions like these.

Dear readers,

I don't know about you, of course, but video conferences play an important role in my everyday life. Two or three times a day, I meet with other people online.

These include one-on-one meetings and smaller groups with my management team or larger groups with all employees. Meetings with ministries or associations and even large events are now often held virtually.

This is beneficial for me. I appreciate seeing the person I am speaking with, whereas previously I would have been on the phone. I value modern conferencing tools, and I save a significant amount of time that would previously have been consumed by business trips and traveling around. I admit that I am a proponent of online meetings.

And yet, when things get a little tricky and every nuance counts, when there are really important things to discuss, then I too prefer face-to-face meetings to any other form of communication. Not everything can be done online, sometimes it just has to be 'in real life' – as the saying goes.

It's no different with our international assignments. Some can be carried out online, others not at all, but they can be perfectly prepared or followed up remotely.

The conclusion is as banal as it is true: it all depends on the situation – as is always the case in life.

Kind regards

Marion Sodemann
Executive Director SES gGmbH



On-site assignments with online support in Mongolia

Master baker in action for Güte Bakery

Since 2024, Dietmar Brandes has visited Güte Bakery in the Mongolian capital Ulaanbaatar three times. His tasks were classic: to improve the quality of bread, croissants and pastries and to train the staff accordingly. One might think that this can only be done on site, if only because dough requires haptic and visual inspection and must also be tasted after baking.

However, this does not rule out remote support between assignments. And master baker Dietmar Brandes offers this too.

At home in Bavaria, he analyses and comments on images and short videos of work steps and baked goods from Güte Bakery and reports to the management on innovations in the local baking industry. At the same time, he is working on recipes for gluten-free products and training courses on how to use modern stone ovens: two topics for upcoming assignments – in person.

Online and on-site assignments in Rwanda

IT experts prepare vocational school for educational software

Boxes full of monitors, cables, power supplies, mini PCs: this donation went to the Lycée de Ruhango Ikirezi, a vocational school in Rwanda with around 2,500 students. The computers will ultimately run educational software, which has also been sponsored.

So far, the entire project has involved two online assignments and two on-site assignments. They were carried out by our IT experts Ulrich Dalkmann and Roland Zilly. The entire first part of this series, including demand analysis, the development of a requirements catalogue and even initial training, took place via video calls. The actual commissioning and integration into the school network, however, was done on site. The project will now continue online with an introduction to the perfect use of the new software.

Online assignment in Ukraine

Doctor takes over introduction to psychotraumatology

For obvious reasons, assignments in Ukraine are currently not possible. Requests from there automatically result in online assignments, as we naturally do not want to turn them down. This also applies to the request from Vigorous Moment – an organisation that cares for traumatised adults in Uzhhorod and prepares therapists for this task.

They requested training courses on psychotraumatology, which were conducted by our expert Andrea Wiedenroth. In a series of video conferences lasting several hours with 14-20 participants, the specialist in psychiatry, psychosomatics, psychotherapy and psychotraumatology explained the theoretical principles for dealing with severely traumatised individuals. She emphasises: 'The online format is very well suited to theory.' However, practical skills cannot be taught in this way. This can only be done on site with exercises, monitoring, correction and supervision.

Online assignments

ASSIGNMENTS ABROAD	2025		2024		2023		2022	
	TOTAL	ONLINE	TOTAL	ONLINE	TOTAL	ONLINE	TOTAL	ONLINE
Africa/MENA*	420	42	379	12	379	8	436	4
Asia/Central Asia	322	24	264	16	244	4	308	4
Europe/Caucasus	84	12	87	6	91	9	102	8
Latin America	83	6	81	3	83	0	103	1
TOTAL	909	84	811	37	797	21	949	17

* Middle East and North Africa

From 17 to 84

The number of international assignments that took place purely online since 2022 has almost quintupled. This is an extremely positive result, and many of the advantages are obvious.

Of course, online assignments involve less bureaucracy in their preparation than face-to-face assignments. For example, all the work involved in travel planning is eliminated, as are travel expenses. This makes digital assignments easy on personnel and the budget. They are, of course, environmentally friendly and also suitable for experts for whom international flights or stays in climatically challenging regions are out of the question. What's more, online we can also offer our help in parts of the world where we cannot send anyone for safety reasons.

But remote assignments are not always practical: video calls, for example, can fail due to an unfavourable time difference. Suboptimal IT equipment or an unreliable power supply are also exclusion criteria. The same applies to tasks that cannot be solved in any other way than 'hands on'. Obstacles like these mean that the online route is simply not an option.

Nevertheless, if everything is right, online assignments are a good addition to our international portfolio, but they certainly cannot replace face-to-face assignments.

Criteria

Practical

- Suitability of the task
- Consent of those involved
- Adequate framework conditions

Duration

- 6 weeks (minimum)
- 12 weeks (maximum)

Frequency and format

- Individual decision on frequency and medium
- Kick-off and wrap-up meeting (moderated by SES)

Documentation

- Request
- Task description
- Interim report
- Assignment report
- Assignment evaluation

Follow-up assignments are possible: both online and in person.

On our own behalf

NEW:

Estate planning and structuring

__The regulation of one's own estate is a sensitive issue that concerns many people. Perhaps you too are thinking about doing something good after your own death and considering an organisation exempt from inheritance tax such as SES?

We are delighted to welcome Martin Friedrich as a volunteer. Mr Friedrich recently retired as a lawyer after having worked for 25 years as a legal adviser to a large non-profit organisation, including in the area of estate administration and advice.



Martin Friedrich

He knows how to implement the last will and testament in a legally secure manner and avoid disputes among the parties involved. Questions often concern, for example, inheritance tax, the right to a compulsory portion or previous wills.

Martin Friedrich is now available for a non-binding and free consultation, which is of course confidential.

CONTACT:

m.friedrich@ses-bonn.de
+49 228 26090-23

SES today remains, newsletter coming soon

__Have you always wanted to hear more from us? That will soon be possible. Starting this spring, we will offer a regular newsletter with news about SES – as usual, by email. If you would like to receive the newsletter, please feel free to subscribe via our website. SES today, our dossier on selected topics, will also continue to be available to you.

A request

__If, following an assignment abroad, you remain in online contact with your clients and continue to work on the objectives or sub-objectives of the previous assignment, please inform your project manager at SES in Bonn. We would like to record these activities for statistical purposes.

Important: We are referring to intensive professional cooperation, not to the occasional friendly tip or exchange on private matters.

On behalf of others

Information and tip

We are happy to tell you about hr_integrate – an organisation based in Karlsruhe that helps refugees in Germany find work, training or study opportunities. This nationwide pro bono initiative brings together HR and management professionals with refugees and, like our VerAplus initiative, works on a one-to-one basis. Thanks to hr_integrate, there are currently 150 active mentoring pairs, and up to 30 refugees are placed in jobs each year.

CONTACT AND INFORMATION:

info@hr-integrate.de and hr-integrate.com

Publishing details

Publisher:
Senior Expert Service (SES) gGmbH
Kaiserstraße 185
53113 Bonn · Germany

Responsible for text:
Dr Heike Nasdala
presse@ses-bonn.de

Design: www.pinger-eden.de
Photos: SES, unless otherwise stated
Editorial deadline: 23.02.2026

Supported by the

