



RIGHT TO DISCONNECT DURING COVID-19

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) has had a severe impact on the daily lives of professionals and managers globally, and more and more countries are closing offices and public spaces and either offering or forcing people to work from home. While the flexibility to work from home is important and allows employees to continue with their daily tasks, it is equally important to maintain a sound separation between work and leisure time and to respect the right to disconnect in these difficult times.

In our guide to the right to disconnect – which can be found here <https://bit.ly/2xOy10U> in five languages – we highlight 10 best practices to be observed when introducing a right to disconnect in the workplace. Many of these best practices are still applicable when working from home due to the Coronavirus, but particular attention should be given to the following five aspects:

- 1 HIGHLIGHT THE IMPORTANCE OF DISCONNECTION.** The right to disconnect is important under normal circumstances to ensure work-life balance and to prevent anxiety, depression, and burnout, but becomes even more important when facing extended periods of working from home. A right to disconnect can also help alleviate the overall level of stress and anxiety that employees feel due to the impact of the Coronavirus.
- 2 DEFINE THE WORKING HOURS.** It may not always be feasible to adhere to a standard 9-5 schedule when working from home in these times, but clear communication and agreement on what constitute normal working hours are important to allow employees to make a distinction between when they are required to stay connected to work and when they are not.
- 3 DIFFERENT GROUPS ARE DIFFERENTLY AFFECTED.** Employees whose children, parents, or other family members depend on them for care and support are particularly affected by the Coronavirus crisis and may not be able to devote as much attention to their work as someone without similar responsibilities. Consequently, the requirement to not penalize employees who are less connected or reward those who are more connected is critical.

- 4 **COMMUNICATION AND TRAINING.** While many professionals and managers are used to remote working, not everyone is. Requirements imposed by many governments have also forced employees to work from home for weeks on end, which itself presents particular challenges. It is important that the employer communicates to all staff what their right to disconnect policy is and offers trainings to those who are e.g. not able to mute email and message notifications on their devices.
- 5 **MONITORING.** Monitoring the implementation of a right to disconnect policy can be challenging when everyone works from home, but feedback can still be collected through online surveys and calls to ensure that the employees' right is respected. Again, this is particularly important when working from home for consecutive weeks.

