

# SwitchOff

Supporting worker's well being during remote work

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## Introduction

Over the last few decades, workplace digitalisation has enabled workers from various sectors to perform their work at any time and location (Eurofound and ILO, 2017). COVID-19 brought an exponential growth in teleworking and the extensive use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has led to opposing effects. On the one hand such technological advancements have led to increased efficiency, yet this shift has led to a “24/7 always on culture” having as such a toll on remote worker’s wellbeing.

Eurofound data suggest that remote workers are twice as likely to exceed the 48-hour working time limit and work in their free time (non-working hours). This data has put the spotlight on the need for a European legal framework directly defining and regulating the right of employees to disconnect (ETUC, 2021). The right to disconnect acknowledges the importance of work-life balance and the need for employees to have dedicated time away from work to rest, recharge, and engage in personal activities.

The present Toolkit has been developed in the framework of the SWITCH OFF project. The project aims at helping managers and VET trainers acquire the appropriate competencies and knowledge on how to facilitate recovery in the workplace and help remote workers disconnect from work and restore their personal resources (emotional, cognitive, physical) at the end of their working day.

### **The aim of this Toolkit Module is:**

To support managers, team leaders, HR professionals in adopting best practices, strategies and also adjusting/or implementing organisational policies that will support their employees’ “right to disconnect”.



**The toolkit consist of the following Module and Chapters:**

**Module: The role of HR professionals and managers in supporting their employees' "right to disconnect"**

- Chapter 1** Introduction to the right to disconnect
- Chapter 2** The role of employers in promoting the right to disconnect – Best practices & strategies
- Chapter 3** Implementing organisational policies that will support the right to disconnect
- Chapter 4** Case study



## **Module**

**The role of HR professionals and managers in supporting their employees' "right to disconnect"**



## Chapter 1a: Introduction to the right to disconnect

### Key points - Learning Objectives

- > Become aware of what the “right to disconnect” refers to
- > Understand the importance of the right to disconnect in the modern workplace
- > Learn what are some possible challenges and obstacles in implementing the right to disconnect

### Defining the ‘right to disconnect’

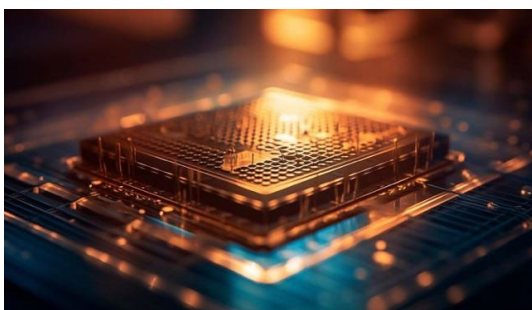
According to Eurofound the ‘right to disconnect’ refers to a “worker’s right to be able to disengage from work and refrain from engaging in work-related electronic communications, such as emails or other messages, during non-work hours.”

The right to disconnect acknowledges the importance of work-life balance and the need for employees to have dedicated time away from work to rest, recharge, and engage in personal activities. By setting clear boundaries and promoting a healthier work culture, it aims to support employee well-being and productivity.

### Why it has become an increasingly important issue in the modern workplace

The right to disconnect has become increasingly important in the modern workplace as a response to the challenges posed by constant connectivity, work-life balance concerns, mental health considerations, productivity issues, and the need for legal protections. It emphasizes the importance of setting boundaries and fostering a healthier work culture that respects employees' personal time and well-being.

**More specifically, the right to disconnect has become an increasingly important issue in the modern workplace due to several factors:**



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**Technological advancements:** The widespread adoption of smartphones, laptops, and other devices has made it easier for employees to be constantly connected to work. While this connectivity brings benefits like increased productivity and flexibility, it also blurs the boundaries between work and personal life. As a result, employees may find it challenging to disconnect from work-related communication and



feel pressured to be available outside of their regular working hours (Becker et al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2018).

**Work-life balance:** Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is crucial for overall well-being. When employees are unable to disconnect from work, it can lead to increased stress, burnout, and negative impacts on their personal lives. The right to disconnect recognizes the importance of setting clear boundaries between work and personal time, allowing employees to prioritize their well-being and engage in activities outside of work.

Picture from prostooleh in Freepik.

**Mental health concerns:** Constant connectivity can have adverse effects on mental health (Becker et al., 2018). Being constantly reachable for work-related matters can create a sense of being always "on" and can lead to feelings of anxiety and overwhelm. The right to disconnect acknowledges the need for employees to have dedicated periods of rest and relaxation, which are essential for mental well-being.



being.

Picture from stocking in Freepik.



**Productivity and efficiency:** Paradoxically, excessive connectivity can harm productivity. Studies have shown that constantly being interrupted by work-related messages and notifications can disrupt concentration and decrease efficiency (Sonntag, 2012). By promoting the right to disconnect, employers can help create an environment that allows employees to focus on their tasks during working hours and recharge during their time off, leading to improved overall productivity.

employees to focus on their tasks during working hours and recharge during their time off, leading to improved overall productivity.

Picture from nikitabuida in Freepik.

**Legal and regulatory developments:** Some countries and jurisdictions have recognised the importance of the right to disconnect and have implemented laws or regulations to protect employees. This has brought more







attention to the issue and sparked discussions around the world about the need to address the potential negative impacts of constant connectivity.

Several countries have taken steps to recognize and protect the right to disconnect. For example, in 2017, France introduced a law that requires companies with more than 50 employees to negotiate with their workforce to establish a framework for when employees can disconnect from digital devices (Couffe & Pralong, 2017). In the French legislation, the "Right to Disconnect" paragraph appears in Article 55 under Chapter II "Adapting the Labour Law to the Digital Age", Article L2242-8 of the Labour Code. Similarly, other countries, including Italy and Spain, have also implemented laws or regulations to safeguard the right to disconnect.



## Challenges and obstacles that individuals and organisations may face in implementing the right to disconnect

Implementing the right to disconnect can present several challenges and obstacles for both individuals and organisations. Some of these challenges include:

1. **Cultural and organisational norms:** In many workplaces, there may be a prevailing culture of long working hours, constant availability, and a high expectation of responsiveness. Shifting these norms and establishing new boundaries may face resistance from employees who have grown accustomed to always being connected. Similarly, organisations may find it challenging to change long-standing practices and create a culture that supports the right to disconnect.
2. **Lack of awareness and understanding:** Many individuals and organisations may not be aware of the negative impacts of constant connectivity or may not fully understand the benefits of disconnecting from work. Educating employees and management about the importance of work-life balance, mental health, and productivity can be a hurdle in implementing the right to disconnect.
3. **Dependency on technology:** Technological tools and platforms have become integral to many work processes, and employees may feel obligated to remain connected to effectively perform their tasks. Overcoming the dependency on technology and finding alternative solutions that allow employees to disconnect without hindering productivity can be a challenge.
4. **Resistance from management:** Managers and leaders may have concerns about the impact of implementing the right to disconnect on productivity, responsiveness to clients or customers, and overall business operations. Convincing management of the long-term benefits and addressing their concerns can be crucial in gaining their support for implementing the right to disconnect.
5. **Flexibility and remote work:** The rise of remote work and flexible work arrangements can make it more challenging to define boundaries around work hours and availability. Without clear guidelines and expectations, employees may struggle to disconnect from work, especially when their workspaces are also their personal spaces.
6. **Enforcement and accountability:** Establishing policies or guidelines for the right to disconnect is one thing, but ensuring compliance and accountability can be another challenge. Organisations may need to develop mechanisms to monitor and address violations, provide support to employees who feel pressured to be constantly connected, and hold managers and leaders accountable for promoting work-life balance.



## Activities

Activity 1 - Challenges and Obstacles	
<b>Duration of Activity</b>	10 minutes
<b>Aim of Activity</b>	The aim of this activity is to help HR professionals and managers reflect and note down challenges and obstacles that their organisation is facing in implementing the right to disconnect
<b>Instructions</b>	Take some time and reflect on any challenges and obstacles that your organisation is facing in implementing the right to disconnect. Note down three obstacles/challenges.

Activity 2 - Overcoming Challenges and Obstacles	
<b>Duration of Activity</b>	10 minutes
<b>Aim of Activity</b>	The aim of this activity is to help HR professionals and managers think of possible solutions to the challenges and obstacles that their organisation is facing in implementing the right to disconnect
<b>Instructions</b>	Note down three possible solutions to the challenges and obstacles that their organisation is facing in implementing the right to disconnect. Try and be specific as possible when describing your solutions.



## Assessment

Question 1	
<b>Assesment type</b>	<b>tool</b> Select one option: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple choice question</li> </ul>
<b>Questions</b>	What does the "right to disconnect" refer to?
<b>Possible Answers</b>	a) The right to switch off electronic devices. b) The right to disconnect from work-related communication outside of working hours. c) The right to take breaks during work hours. d) The right to disconnect from the internet.

Question 2	
<b>Assesment type</b>	<b>tool</b> Select one option: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple choice question</li> </ul>
<b>Questions</b>	How can the right to disconnect be enforced and maintained in organisations?
<b>Possible Answers</b>	a) Developing clear policies and guidelines. b) Providing training and education about work-life balance. c) Monitoring and addressing violations. d) All of the above.



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## Short summary and key take home lessons

The "right to disconnect" refers to employees' right to disconnect from work-related communication outside of working hours.

- > It addresses the negative impacts of constant connectivity on work-life balance and mental well-being.
- > Technological advancements have made constant connectivity more prevalent in the modern workplace.
- > The right to disconnect has become increasingly important due to concerns about work-life balance, mental health, and productivity.
- > Countries like France have implemented laws to protect the right to disconnect.
- > Implementing the right to disconnect faces challenges such as cultural resistance, technology dependency, and concerns about productivity.
- > Organisations can enforce and maintain the right to disconnect through clear policies, training, and monitoring.

The right to disconnect promotes employee well-being and productivity.



## Chapter 2a: The role of employers in promoting the right to disconnect – Best practices & strategies

### Key points - Learning Objectives

- > Become aware of the employer's role in promoting the right to disconnect.
- > Understand the benefits of having clear policies on the right to disconnect.
- > Become familiar with best practices to promote the right to disconnect.
- > Implement communication and technology practices to help the right to disconnect.
- > Learn how to include work-life balance and wellbeing practices in their organisational culture.
- > Learn how to support their employees' right to disconnect.

### Responsibilities of employers & HR professionals/managers in promoting the right to disconnect

When promoting the right to disconnect, employers' and HR professionals' main responsibilities include creating and implementing policies that establish clear boundaries between work and personal life. Among other things, this involves setting reasonable working hours, encouraging employees to take breaks and vacations, and discouraging after-work communication or excessive overtime. They should also provide adequate training and resources to ensure employees can effectively manage their workload and prioritise their well-being. Additionally, employers and HR professionals/managers must lead by example, fostering a company culture that respects work-life balance and supports employees in maintaining healthy boundaries between their professional and personal lives. By actively promoting the right to disconnect, employers and HR professionals/managers contribute to a more sustainable and fulfilling work environment.

Below you are presented with examples best practices that employers could apply when promoting their employees' right to disconnect.

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## Best practices on the right to disconnect

LiveWell: the Zurich app that promotes employee wellbeing and happiness	
<b>Topic/Area</b>	Employee wellbeing
<b>Type of Best Practice</b>	Online Tools, Applications or Platform
<b>Date released</b>	May 2022
<b>Partners/network</b>	a) Zurich Portugal b) Portugal c) Employer
<b>Description of the methods/ approach</b>	Through the LiveWell app, Zurich Portugal – a company operating in the insurance sector – intends to reinforce its concern for the holistic wellbeing of its employees in various dimensions, namely physical, mental, social, and financial. With the app, the company wants to be closer to its employees, contributing in a simple, practical, and relaxed way to reinforce or introduce small daily gestures so that they become healthy and happy routines, not only for the employees but also for their families. The app contains personalised tips and content, to be more attractive. In practice, it invites users to set one of five available health goals – energy, fitness, happiness, weight loss, or stress – and define their main interests, such as sleep, financial health, mental health, relationships, parenting, or alternative medicine, as well as the indicators to measure.
<b>Purpose/Aim</b>	With the LiveWell app, Zurich Portugal aims to promote a healthy lifestyle for its 500 employees and raise awareness to the importance of an active life. It also intends for an adjusted conciliation between the personal, family, and professional lives, as it understands that this is essential for the workers' happiness.
<b>Overview of the lessons learned which are relevant to the project</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritising workers wellbeing and happiness by reinforcing healthy work-life balance habits such as the right to disconnect.</li> <li>• Promoting the conciliation of personal, family, and professional lives of workers, by encouraging them to plan their activities based on their right to disconnect.</li> </ul>
<b>Web link</b>	<a href="http://www.zurich.com.pt/pt-pt/a-zurich/sala-deimprensa/comunicados-imprensa/2022/30-mai">http://www.zurich.com.pt/pt-pt/a-zurich/sala-deimprensa/comunicados-imprensa/2022/30-mai</a> [link only available in Portuguese]





<b>EDP “Mind Your Mind” Campaign</b>	
<b>Topic/Area</b>	Employee wellbeing
<b>Type of Best Practice</b>	Campaign for mental health in the workplace
<b>Date released</b>	2020
<b>Partners/network</b>	a) EDP group b) Portugal c) Employer
<b>Description of the methods/ approach</b>	The "Mind your Mind" campaign addresses mental health issues and is developed by the EDP group – a company operating in the energy sector – for its almost 13.000 employees, by promoting a variety of initiatives related to the theme every October. This initiative is part of the company's wellbeing strategy, with five defined pillars focused on physical, mental, professional, financial, and emotional health. As part of this strategy, the EDP group promotes talks with experts in different mental health and wellbeing topics, aiming to raise employees' awareness on the importance of taking care of their psychological wellbeing. The EDP group also organises regular workshops and challenges to encourage employees to adopt healthy lifestyle habits – namely related to physical exercise, mindfulness and other practices that contribute to a better work-life balance and stress/emotions control. Small-scale strategies, like encouraging small mindfulness breaks throughout the day are supported.
<b>Purpose/Aim</b>	The company aims to be an example of social responsibility and promote the wellbeing and mental health of its employees. The EDP group wants other companies to follow its example and help their employees achieve more balanced lives and feel supported by their institutions so that they can, in turn, take home their new skills for dealing with mental health and improve their lives and those of their families.
<b>Overview of the lessons learned which are relevant to the project</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting mindfulness moments in short breaks throughout the day helps to switch off the “automatic pilot”.</li> <li>• Promoting talks, workshops, and other initiatives on mental health and how to switch off from work helps workers to feel supported and gives them new skills to reach wellbeing.</li> </ul>
<b>Web link</b>	<a href="http://www.edp.com/en/people/well-being-and-benefits">www.edp.com/en/people/well-being-and-benefits</a>

## Practical strategies on the right to disconnect that employers and HR professionals/managers can use

Strategy 1 - Protected time policy	
<p><b>Brief description of strategy</b></p>	<p>The "Protected time policy" is a practical strategy that employers and HR professionals/managers can implement to promote the right to disconnect of their teams, if there is no full autonomy in the management of working hours by the workers themselves. This policy designates specific periods of time during the day, in which employees are encouraged to prioritise personal and non-work-related activities without the expectation of work-related communication or tasks. The breaks and their duration, as well as at what time of the day they take place can be agreed with each worker and their needs. A start and end time for the working day must also be defined. Before and after this time, total switch-off from work related communication and activities must be ensured.</p>
<p><b>Purpose/Aim of strategy</b></p>	<p>The purpose is to create dedicated windows of time where employees can disconnect from work and focus on personal well-being, family, hobbies, or other non-work commitments. The aim is to foster work-life balance, reduce fatigue and burnout, and support employees in achieving a healthy integration of work and personal life.</p>

Strategy 2 - Disconnect Duels	
<p><b>Brief description of strategy</b></p>	<div> </div> <p>"Disconnect Duels" is a strategy that transforms the right to disconnect into an engaging competition within the organisation. Employees are encouraged to participate voluntarily in weekly "duels" where they compete to see who can disconnect the most effectively during designated hours. Points and rewards can be given to winners.</p>
<p><b>Purpose/Aim of strategy</b></p>	<p>The aim of the "Disconnect Duels" strategy is to make the right to disconnect fun and engaging while reinforcing the importance of work-life balance. By turning it into a game, employees are motivated to disconnect from work-related digital devices and communication tools, reducing burnout, improving well-being, and fostering a culture of respecting personal time.</p>



## Activity

<b>Enhancing the right to disconnect for remote workers: collaborative exploration and action Overcoming Challenges and Obstacles</b>	
<b>Duration of Activity</b>	45 minutes
<b>Aim of Activity</b>	The aim of this collaborative activity is to engage employers, HR professionals/managers, and remote workers in a reflective and open dialogue. It aims to deepen their understanding of the benefits and challenges associated with the right to disconnect for remote workers, while also fostering the creation of practical strategies to support work-life balance.
<b>Instructions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For this activity, you will need an in-house or external facilitator for the reflective session. It can be done face-to-face or in a digital format.</li> <li>• Introduction and context (5 minutes): the facilitator explains the objectives of the activity to the participants, emphasizing the significance of work-life balance and the unique considerations for remote workers regarding the right to disconnect.</li> <li>• Benefits and challenges brainstorming (15 minutes): the facilitator asks participants to gather in small discussion groups (4-6 members) and instructs each group to brainstorm and discuss about 2-3 potential benefits of implementing the right to disconnect specifically for remote workers. The facilitator should encourage participants to draw from personal experiences and insights. Each group should use a flipchart (if face-to-face) or white board (if online) to write down their ideas.</li> <li>• Strategy Development (10 minutes): following the discussion on benefits and challenges, the facilitator instructs each group to think about a practical strategy or initiative that can be implemented at the organisational level to address one of the identified benefits or challenges, emphasizing the need for actionable and effective solutions.</li> <li>• Presentation, discussion, and wrap-up (15 minutes): each group selects a lead speaker to present their identified benefits, challenges, and corresponding strategies. The facilitator summarises the key takeaways from the activity and encourages participants to commit to implementing the identified strategies, as an action plan, within their organisation to support remote workers' right to disconnect.</li> </ul>



## Assessment tool

Question 1	
<b>Assesment tool type</b>	Multiple choice question
<b>Questions</b>	Of the following strategies promoted by managers, which on(es) can effectively help workers disconnect from work and improve their well-being?
<b>Possible Answers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Discouraging non-essential communication outside working hours.</li> <li>b) Managing employee's workload realistically.</li> <li>c) Show assertiveness and always protect the interests of the organisation.</li> <li>d) Promote and encourage breaks and mindfulness strategies.</li> </ul>

Question 2	
<b>Assesment tool type</b>	Multiple choice question
<b>Questions</b>	Implementing the right to disconnect from work not only benefits the employees, but also offers numerous advantages for employers. From the following list, which are the four benefits for employers?
<b>Possible Answers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Organisational culture focused on the individual and his/her needs.</li> <li>b) Talent attraction.</li> <li>c) Employee engagement.</li> <li>d) More hours of workers availability.</li> <li>e) Reduced absenteeism.</li> <li>f) Presenteeism.</li> <li>g) Improved productivity.</li> <li>h) Absence of commuting.</li> </ul>



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## Short summary and key take home lessons

- > Employers should recognise the significance of the right to disconnect, which allows employees to disconnect from work-related responsibilities outside working hours, promoting well-being and work-life balance.
- > Employers play a crucial role in promoting the right to disconnect. They should prioritise work-life balance, establish clear policies, and lead by example to foster a supportive work environment.
- > Implementing best practices, such as setting reasonable working hours, addressing after-work communication, providing flexibility, and offering training, helps employers support the right to disconnect effectively.
- > Promoting the right to disconnect benefits employers through enhanced employee well-being, increased retention and talent attraction, improved productivity and focus, and a positive organisational culture.
- > Employers can leverage technology to support the right to disconnect by minimising after-work communication, setting clear expectations, promoting digital well-being, and implementing flexible technology policies.
- > Creating a work culture that values work-life balance and prioritises employee well-being contributes to a positive organisational culture and fosters employee engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty.



## Chapter 3a: Implementing organisational policies that will support the right to disconnect

### Key Learning Objectives

- > Understanding the importance of implementing policies to safeguard the right to disconnect for remote workers in today's dynamic work environment.
- > Identifying the key elements of effective organisational policies that promote work-life balance, employee well-being, and a supportive work culture.
- > Gaining insights into evidence-based strategies and best practices for communicating, training, and evaluating policies to ensure successful implementation and adherence.

### Introduction

In today's dynamic and rapidly changing work environment, new challenges are continually emerging. These issues necessitate proactive and adaptive approaches to address the evolving needs of organisations and their workforce. To address these challenges, organisations must establish well-tailored organisational policies that safeguard employee well-being by aligning with the company's specific characteristics and requirements.

### Defining organisational policies

In the organisational context, organisational policies refer to **formal guidelines and principles established by organisations to regulate various aspects of work and behaviour within the workplace (Petts et al., 2022)**. Empirical evidence stresses that organisational policies can counter several critical aspects that, if not properly regulated, can represent a threat to the employees' wellbeing such as for example ethical issues, discrimination and harassment, the perception of organisational injustice, poor work-life balance, and unregulated remote work (Mohammad et al., 2019). This last issue is receiving a lot of attention lately due to the spread of the remote modality of working and since the disrespect of the employees right to disconnect can lead to several negative consequences such as the inability to psychologically detach from work, the lack of recovery time and in extreme cases to burnout (Hayes et al., 2021). Therefore, in this chapter, we will provide guidance on how to implement organisational policies that safeguard the right to disconnect of employees. Key elements of such organisational policies will be discussed, including their scope, objectives, and implementation strategies.



## Benefits of implementing organisational policies that promote disconnection: evidence based studies

As mentioned above, implementing organizational policies to support and encourage work disconnection can yield several benefits.

1. It **enhances work-life balance** by providing teleworkers with the chance to reach an equilibrium between work and personal life and at the same time, it promotes work recovery, which is necessary to reset both cognitive and physical resources. The possibility to recover from work can potentially lead to **reduce stress and prevent burnout** among workers, which are known by the scientific literature to be particularly common with respect to remote working (Hayes et al., 2020; Hayes et al., 2021).
2. Allowing teleworkers to disconnect and have designated non-working time can **increase performance during working hours** (Petitta & Ghezzi, 2023). Rested and recovered employees are more likely to be **focused, motivated, and perform better** when actively engaged in their work tasks (Bhattacharya et al., 2020).
3. Developing organisational policies to safeguard employers' wellbeing can also be a **very competitive advantage** for the company's reputation and branding. By offering attractive employees' benefits, competitive compensation packages, and opportunities for career development, wellbeing oriented policies especially those related to the right to disconnect, have become increasingly important in **attracting talent to organisations** (Yasin & Huseynova, 2020). As work-life balance and employees' well-being gain prominence, candidates are actively seeking out companies that prioritize these aspects in their organisational policies (Muraya et al., 2021).
4. When companies demonstrate their commitment to fair hiring practices, equal opportunities, and employee well-being, they become more attractive to job seekers. Such organisational policies can also **foster employee satisfaction and loyalty, leading to higher retention rates** (Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2020).



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## What happens if a company does not keep their word about implementing the policies?



1. Failing to implement announced policies or disregarding existing organisational policies can have severe repercussions for a company. Beyond **damaging the company's credibility and eroding trust among stakeholders**, it can also lead to **negative consequences for employees' morale and engagement**, affecting overall performance (Yang et al., 2022).

2. Non-compliance with policies **exposes the company to legal and regulatory risks**, potentially leading to penalties or lawsuits.

3. It can have far-reaching **effects on the company's culture and reputation**, creating an atmosphere of inconsistency and disregard for rules.

4. In the context of remote work, the failure to implement organisational policies that safeguard the right to disconnect can give rise to a concerning

phenomenon known as **presenteeism** (Rhule et al., 2020). Remote employees may feel compelled to continue working even when they are sick or unwell, fearing negative consequences or job insecurity. This behavior can lead to reduced productivity, burnout, and a decline in overall well-being. To mitigate the detrimental impact of presenteeism and promote a healthy work environment, organisations must establish clear guidelines and

expectations regarding sick leave in remote work settings. Employees should be encouraged to prioritize their well-being and take the necessary time off to

recover when needed. Adequate support and resources, such as access to healthcare benefits and mental health services, should be provided to remote workers to address their well-being effectively.

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## A step-by-step guide on how to develop a policy on the right to disconnect

### Step 1 - Identify the Policy Objective

- **Conduct a needs assessment:** Begin by conducting a thorough assessment of the current work environment, employee experiences, and existing challenges related to work-life balance and constant connectivity. This can involve collecting data through surveys, interviews, focus groups, or analyzing existing research and literature. Identify specific issues and problems that employees face regarding the right to disconnect.
- **Review existing organisational policies and practices:** Evaluate any existing organisational policies, guidelines, or practices that are already in place within the organisation. Determine whether they adequately address the issue of work-life balance and the right to disconnect. Identify any gaps or areas for improvement that need to be addressed in the new policy.
- **Engage stakeholders: Involve relevant stakeholders in the policy development process.** This can include employees, human resources professionals, managers, and representatives from relevant departments or teams. There are several approaches to involve stakeholders throughout the process. Firstly, organizing focus groups provides an opportunity for in-depth discussions and exploration of diverse perspectives. Additionally, town hall meetings with leaders and employees foster transparency, enabling open discussions, addressing concerns, and receiving suggestions. Workshops or training sessions can educate employees about the benefits of the policy, building support from the workforce. Online collaboration platforms or intranet portals create accessible discussion forums for stakeholders to contribute ideas. One-on-one meetings with key stakeholders allow personalized discussions and feedbacks. Utilizing various communication channels in a communication campaign ensures stakeholders are well-informed. Finally, appointing employee representatives or a policy task force ensures that employee perspectives are considered, promoting a collaborative policy development process.
- **Define the problem statement:** Clearly articulate the problem or issue that the policy aims to address. Use the insights gained from the needs assessment and stakeholder engagement to draft a concise and specific problem statement.
- **Establish the policy's purpose and scope:** Clearly define the purpose and scope of the policy. Determine the overarching goals and objectives that the policy intends to achieve.
- **Consider legal and regulatory requirements:** Consider any legal or regulatory requirements that may affect the policy development process.
- **Draft the policy and obtain approval:** Create a draft of the policy and present it to key decision-makers, such as senior management or the board of directors, for approval.



Address any concerns or questions raised during the approval process and make necessary revisions (Prager et al., 2022).

## Step 2 - Communicate and Train

- **Define a dissemination plan:** Develop a communication plan to effectively inform employees about the new policy. Conduct training sessions or workshops to ensure employees understand the policy, its implications, and their roles and responsibilities in compliance.
- **Clear and concise policy documentation:** Develop a well-written policy document that is clear, concise, and easily understandable.
- **Email or memorandum announcement:** Send out a formal email or memorandum to all employees, stakeholders, and relevant parties to announce the new policy.
- **Training sessions:** Conduct training sessions to ensure that employees have all relevant skills and knowledge needed to adhere to the new policy.
- **Interactive workshops or role-playing exercises:** Organize interactive workshops or role-playing exercises to reinforce understanding and application of the policy. This hands-on approach allows employees to practice implementing the policy in realistic scenarios and encourages active participation and engagement.
- **Managers as advocates:** Train managers and supervisors to effectively communicate and reinforce the policy with their respective teams.
- **Ongoing communication:** Maintain regular communication channels to provide updates, reminders, or clarifications about the policy. Use email newsletters, company-wide meetings, or internal messaging platforms to keep employees informed and engaged (Petts et al., 2022).

## Step 2 - Monitor and evaluate

- **Surveys and questionnaires:** Designing and administering surveys or questionnaires to employees, stakeholders, or relevant parties can provide valuable insights on their awareness, understanding, and perceptions of the policy. These tools can gather quantitative and qualitative data to assess policy effectiveness, compliance, and areas for improvement.
- **Interviews and Focus Groups:** Conducting interviews or focus groups with key stakeholders can provide in-depth qualitative information about their experiences, challenges, and suggestions related to the policy. These methods allow for open discussions and the exploration of diverse perspectives.

- **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Metrics:** Defining specific KPIs and metrics related to the policy can enable quantitative measurement of its impact and effectiveness.
- **Case studies and benchmarking:** Analyzing case studies or conducting benchmarking exercises with similar organisations or industry best practices can provide insights into successful policy implementation strategies and potential areas for improvement (Da et al., 2022).

## Activity

Case Study Analysis	
<b>Duration of Activity</b>	30 minutes
<b>Aim of Activity</b>	The aim of the activity is to analyze and provide well-reasoned and supported responses to the questions presented in the case study regarding the implementation of a remote work policy at the multinational corporation. The goal is to identify key considerations for policy creation, anticipate potential challenges, suggest strategies to overcome them, offer recommendations for effective communication and training of employees, evaluate the benefits and risks of the policy, and develop an action plan for successful implementation.
<b>Instructions</b>	<p>Read the following case study carefully and analyse the scenario presented. Apply the knowledge and steps outlined in the chapter to answer the questions that follow. Consider the policy creation and implementation process, as well as the potential challenges and best practices discussed.</p> <p>Case analysis: A Corporation's Remote Work Policy</p> <p>The corporation concerned, a multinational company, is willing to implement a remote work policy to provide more flexibility to its employees and attract top talents. The Human Resources department has been tasked with developing the policy and ensuring a smooth rollout. The executive team is supportive of the initiative but wants to ensure that productivity and communication are maintained effectively.</p>



## Assessment

Question 1		
<b>Assesment type</b>	<b>tool</b>	Open Question
<b>Questions</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [Based on the steps outlined in the chapter, identify and explain the key considerations that the Human Resources department should address when creating the remote work policy for the corporation.</li> <li>• What are some potential challenges/obstacles that the corporation may face during the implementation of the remote work policy? Suggest strategies or best practices to overcome these challenges.</li> <li>• How can the corporation effectively communicate and train employees on the remote work policy? Provide specific recommendations and methods to ensure understanding, engagement, and compliance.</li> <li>• Evaluate the potential benefits and risks of implementing the remote work policy for the corporation. Consider factors such as employee satisfaction, productivity, work-life balance, and organisational culture.</li> <li>• Develop an action plan outlining the steps and timeline for the successful implementation of the remote work policy at the Corporation. Include key milestones, responsible parties, and communication strategies.]</li> </ul>

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## Short summary and key take home lessons

- > Implementing organisational policies for disconnection in remote work improves work-life balance, reduces stress, and boosts employee performance.
- > Failure to uphold organisational policies can damage a company's reputation, trust, and employee morale.
- > A step-by-step guide includes defining policy objectives, involving stakeholders, and obtaining approval.
- > Effective communication through workshops, training sessions, and online platforms enhances policy understanding.



- > Monitoring policy impact using surveys, interviews, and KPIs helps make informed decisions and improvements.

## Chapter 4: Case studies

### Key learning objectives

- > Understand the factors that lead to the development of the concept of disconnection from work
- > Become aware of the organisations that have successfully implemented the right to disconnect
- > Apply practices for disconnection from work that are already implemented worldwide
- > Identify challenges and obstacles that might be faced in implementing the right to disconnect

In this chapter, we present some real-world examples of organisations that have successfully implemented the right to disconnect, as well as case studies of those who have faced challenges or obstacles.

### Successful case studies

Some examples of organisations who have successfully introduced policies to support their employee' right to disconnect are listed below:

1. **Volkswagen:** In 2021, the German company Volkswagen Group introduced a policy called 'Work Smart, Live Smart'. This policy includes guidelines for employees on how to disconnect from work. Some of the measures included in the policy are related to the

frequency reduction of the after-work hour's communication and the encouragement of the use of digital tools to better manage employees' workload. Additionally, training programmes for both managers and employees were also introduced aiming to raise awareness on the importance of work-life balance. Lastly, an employee assistance programme has been launched in order to provide both support and related resources to employees who are experiencing work-related stress.

2. **Daimler:** In 2014, the German company introduced a policy called 'Mail on Holiday' which was implemented in an attempt to reduce the amount of emails employees received during their holidays. With this policy, all emails received during their holidays were automatically deleted.
3. **Barilla:** In 2016, the Italian company introduced an agreement that was offering the possibility to employees appointed with tasks that can be completed remotely, to work outside the company's premises. This possibility started with a limit of 32 hours per month, except employees who have children or other caring duties, who could extend to 64 hours per month. The employees could be contacted only through company devices during the company premises' working hours. Part of the agreement was also the training, to both employees and managers on the importance of work-life balance, the provision of technological tools to better manage the workload and the cultivation of a culture that values their employees' personal life.
4. **Enel:** In 2016, the Italian company introduced a pilot project and in 2020 the global 'smart working' policy which includes clear guidelines on work hours and encourages employees in disconnecting from work after working hours. Part of the approach is also the training of both managers and employees on the importance of disconnecting from work outside of designated hours, encouraging the use of digital tools (e.g., online calendars and task management apps) for better workload management, and setting clear expectations for response times and communication during non-working hours. Another part of the Enel's approach is 'stress management', which includes the provision of resources and support (e.g., access to counselling services) to employees to manage stress and maintain their well-being.

## Challenges and Obstacles

Apart from all the successful case studies mentioned above, there are also examples of companies that face various challenges and obstacles that can negatively impact the process for introducing actions supporting disconnection from work. Examples of such companies are listed below:

**Apple:** Given the global nature of Apple's supply chain, suppliers and contractors are often scattered across different time zones. This creates a situation where individuals and teams need to collaborate and communicate effectively despite facing significant time differences. While this interconnectedness has numerous advantages, it also brings about challenges, one of which is the difficulty in disconnecting from work





**PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC):** The company offers its services to international clients and usually the project deadlines are relatively tight. The employees who are mainly consultants and auditors find it difficult to disconnect from work especially during financial audits, which are considered peak periods.

**Bloomberg:** Employees (e.g., journalists and analysts) working at companies related to financial news and data, need to remain informed and ready to respond to breaking news. Thus, the nature of their responsibilities imposes difficulties in disconnecting from work.

## Activities

Activity 1 - 'Disconnection-Action Plan'	
<b>Duration of Activity</b>	60 minutes
<b>Aim of Activity</b>	The aim of the activity is to analyze and provide well-reasoned and supported responses to the questions presented in the case study regarding the implementation of a remote work policy at the multinational corporation. The goal is to identify key considerations for policy creation, anticipate potential challenges, suggest strategies to overcome them, offer recommendations for effective communication and training of employees, evaluate the benefits and risks of the policy, and develop an action plan for successful implementation.
<b>Instructions</b>	<p>Read the following case study carefully and analyse the scenario presented. Apply the knowledge and steps outlined in the chapter to answer the questions that follow. Consider the policy creation and implementation process, as well as the potential challenges and best practices discussed.</p> <p>Case analysis: A Corporation's Remote Work Policy</p> <p>The corporation concerned, a multinational company, is willing to implement a remote work policy to provide more flexibility to its employees and attract top talents. The Human Resources department has been tasked with developing the policy and ensuring a smooth rollout. The executive team is supportive of the initiative but wants to ensure that productivity and communication are maintained effectively.</p>



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## Short summary and key take home lessons

- There are several successful case studies of organisations and national governments that have introduced policies related to disconnection from work.
- There are factors such as time-zones, the nature of responsibilities, that impose barriers towards the implementation of actions for disconnection from work.
- An Action Plan can be prepared within different timeframes which enables a company to start with the immediate actions and at the same time have the potential to implement more demanding actions in the future.



## Appendix

### Chapter 1 – Assessment tool correct answers

Question 1	
Assesment tool type	Select one option: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple choice question</li> </ul>
Questions	What does the "right to disconnect" refer to?
Possible Answers	a) The right to switch off electronic devices. <b>b) The right to disconnect from work-related communication outside of working hours.</b> c) The right to take breaks during work hours. d) The right to disconnect from the internet.

Question 2	
Assesment tool type	Select one option: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple choice question</li> </ul>
Questions	How can the right to disconnect be enforced and maintained in organisations?



<p><b>Possible Answers</b></p>	<p>a) Developing clear policies and guidelines.                  b) Providing training and education about work-life balance.                  c) Monitoring and addressing violations.  <b>d) All of the above.</b></p>
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## Chapter 2 - Assessment tool correct answers

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Question 1</b></p>	
<p><b>Assesment tool type</b></p>	<p>Multiple choice question</p>
<p><b>Questions</b></p>	<p>Of the following strategies promoted by managers, which on(es) can effectively help workers disconnect from work and improve their well-being?</p>
<p><b>Possible Answers</b></p>	<p>a) <b>Discouraging non-essential communication outside working hours.</b>                  b) <b>Managing employee's workload realistically.</b>                  c) Show assertiveness and always protect the interests of the organisation.  <b>d) Promote and encourage breaks and mindfulness strategies.</b>                  e) Contacting workers as little as possible.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Question 2</b></p>	
<p><b>Assesment tool type</b></p>	<p>Multiple choice question</p>



<b>Questions</b>	Implementing the right to disconnect from work not only benefits the employees, but also offers numerous advantages for employers. From the following list, which are the four benefits for employers?
<b>Possible Answers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Organisational culture focused on the individual and his/her needs.</li> <li>b) <b>Talent attraction.</b></li> <li>c) <b>Employee engagement.</b></li> <li>d) More hours of workers availability.</li> <li>e) <b>Reduced absenteeism.</b></li> <li>f) Presenteeism.</li> <li>g) <b>Improved productivity.</b></li> <li>h) Absence of commuting.</li> </ul>

## Chapter 4 – Activity 1: Action Plan Template

<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible person</b>	<b>Priority</b> <i>(e.g. High, Medium, Low)</i>	<b>Status</b> <i>(e.g. In Progress, Not started, Can start)</i>	<b>Start</b>	<b>End</b>	<b>Notes</b>

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