

Healthy balance between staying connected and disconnecting



WHY DO YOU NEED TO DISCONNECT?

Nowadays, hybrid working is everywhere you look. Despite the **benefits** of hybrid working, such as autonomy, productivity, mobility and more, we also see **pitfalls** when it comes to employee wellbeing.

The physical boundaries between our work and private lives are becoming increasingly blurred, which also has an impact on the mental separation between our professional and private lives. We end up wearing several **different hats** at the same time (employee, manager, parent, partner, friend) and we are active in the **digital world** almost all of the time in order to stay in touch with our friends and colleagues.

Disruptions to the work/life balance and the increasing digitalisation can weigh heavily on our psychosocial wellbeing.

It is therefore important that you are **aware** of:

- your working hours and free time;
- your (social) media; and
- your accessibility during and outside of work.

Being able to leave your work behind you both physically and mentally during breaks and outside of working hours is linked to **positive results in terms of wellbeing**, such as greater focus and higher and more sustainable energy levels.

That is why it is crucial to take the time you need to rest and get away from work. In other words, finding a healthy balance between staying connected and **disconnecting**, not only during holiday periods, but also during and after working hours.



To the checklist



What does the legislation say?

HOW TO USE THE CHECKLIST

To support organisations in this area, the IDEWE Group has drawn up this **checklist**. The checklist can be completed at **organisational or team level**. It can also serve as a guide during meetings of the committee for prevention and protection at work.

Disconnection is a broad topic. That is why we have highlighted a range of aspects relating to the way we work both during and outside of working hours. We have also listed a number of good practices. Note, however, that there are no right or wrong answers. The answers to the checklist only indicate any **areas for attention** that may be present within the organisation in terms of disconnecting. It is recommended that you assess any areas for attention and make **arrangements** and/or take appropriate **measures**.



Checklist

Disconnecting

Outside working hours	
Work is rarely carried out after working hours	<input type="checkbox"/>
E-mails are rarely sent after working hours	<input type="checkbox"/>
Responses are not expected via digital channels after working hours	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employees are not expected to be accessible by phone after working hours	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employees are not called by phone during their day off (for part-time staff, for example)	<input type="checkbox"/>
The start and end times of working hours are respected	<input type="checkbox"/>
Awareness is raised of the need to disconnect completely from work after working hours and to go to another place (or if working from home, to relax in a different room).	<input type="checkbox"/>

During leave	
A back-up is provided during periods of leave	<input type="checkbox"/>
A back-up is provided when a manager is on holiday	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is clear who is on holiday and when	<input type="checkbox"/>
E-mails are monitored during leave periods	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employees are not expected to be reachable by phone during periods of leave	<input type="checkbox"/>
Before periods of leave, it is the norm to allow time to finish or close work	<input type="checkbox"/>
After periods of leave, it is the norm to allow time to go through e-mails	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leave is taken in a longer period (at least two weeks) at least once a year	<input type="checkbox"/>
A guideline has been established to stipulate that employees are not expected to work or be available while on holiday	<input type="checkbox"/>
Measures have been introduced within our organisation to help employees disconnect while on holiday (such as closing mailboxes)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Awareness is raised among employees in order to ensure that they set up a clear out-of-office message each time they take leave	<input type="checkbox"/>

During working hours	
Lunch breaks are respected	<input type="checkbox"/>
Active micro-breaks are taken (standing up, walking, stretching, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employees may decide for themselves when to reply to e-mails during the day (or be available online)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employees have sufficient options to relax in the area in which they are working (office/home workplace)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employees alternate between mental tasks and movement or manual work	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is possible to perform work uninterruptedly for at least one hour at a time	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is an understanding of distracting factors when working from home (children at home, caring for an ill family member, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attention is paid to taking breaks in long (online) meetings or training courses	<input type="checkbox"/>

Teleworking policy	
The difference between structural and occasional teleworking is known	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attention is paid to ergonomics in the home workplace (laptop stand, chair settings, external mouse and keyboard, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working from home is regulated by law and is set out in an addendum to the employment contract (working hours, technical support, compensation and so on)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clear agreements on working from home are made within the team	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online meetings are limited in time	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online meetings are limited in terms of how often they take place	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is a sufficient balance between formal and informal contact moments between managers and employees	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attention is paid to healthy teleworking (both physical and mental)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Managers are given support in training employees remotely	<input type="checkbox"/>

For part-time work	
It is clear who is working and when, and where this can be found	<input type="checkbox"/>
Part-time employees are not telephoned on their days off	<input type="checkbox"/>
Part-time employees are not expected to answer their phone on their day off	<input type="checkbox"/>

Below are the main areas for attention regarding disconnecting within our organisation

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Are there any specific peak periods or exceptions that require attention in relation to this topic?

YES / NO

If yes, which?

Which measures would make sense in our organisation for supporting employees to disconnect?

- Draw up guidelines
- Agreements relating to e-mail usage
- Agreements relating to being available, such as after working hours, during leave or on days off
- Raising awareness among managers and/or employees
- Intervention at team level in terms of expectations and habits relating to media use
- Indicate when you may be contacted via Skype, Teams and so on by changing your status

Other:



What does the legislation say?



RECOVERY ACT 2018

With the Recovery Act of 22 March 2018 and, more specifically, the section *Discussions about disconnecting and the use of digital means of communication*, the government made employers and employees aware of the risks of being continuously available online. The legislation builds on the misconception that working too much means work is always being done well. Employees who continue to reply to e-mails after working hours may, however, feel that their work is never done, which increases the risk of stress and burnout. The right to disconnect should ease the pressure on employees.

LABOUR DEAL 2022

The Labour Deal 2022 goes one step further and provides for a **right to disconnect**. This legislation obliges employers with 20 or more employees to create agreements at organisational level on the right to disconnect. These agreements must be set out in a company-wide CLA or in the company policy before 1 April 2023.

AGREEMENT FRAMEWORK

The agreement framework must include the following as a minimum:

- ✓ Practical arrangements on the application of employees' right to not be available outside of working hours.
- ✓ Guidelines on the use of digital tools in order to ensure that employees' breaks, leave, private life and family life are guaranteed.
- ✓ Actions to train and raise awareness among employees and managers on how to use digital tools wisely and the risks associated with excessive connection.

If such a CLA is concluded at industrial (joint industrial committee) or national (CNT/NAR) level, the obligation to create agreements at organisational level lapses.