
A Right of the World's Workers: Digital Disconnection

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While adolescents especially are stressed on the need to disconnect from the digital sphere at least for a few hours, workers around the world emphasize their right to disconnect.

It happens that employers do not always respect the personal space of workers, and beyond their working hours or compliance with their goals or standards, they contact them through various digital means, breaking into spaces thought for the family and the enjoyment of free time.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, teleworking has experienced significant growth around the world and is kept above all in those entities that have found benefits in terms of productivity and savings; as well as for the advantages it brings to employees.



In the report *Working time and work-life balance in the world*, presented by the International Labor Organization (ILO) earlier this year, that organization analyzes the two main aspects of working time: working hours and the organization of said working time, which also refers to remote work and teleworking.

This report is the first focused on the balance between professional and personal life, and indicates that more than a third of employees in the world work more than 48 hours per week.

Limiting the number of working hours to protect workers' health has been the focus of attention for more than a century, but efforts for a balance between work and private life gain strength much later, when decision-makers become more aware of the difficulty of workers in reconciling personal life with paid work.



“There’s considerable evidence that work-life balance policies provide important benefits to companies.” , supporting the argument that these types of policies are beneficial for both employers and employees,” indicates the ILO report.

What’s known as the Right to Disconnect closely overlaps with the above since the connectivity maintained by those dedicated to teleworking, remote work or hybrid work should not be understood as equivalent to permanent availability depending on the company.

Such a mismatch between personal and work time, which among other things is equivalent to answering phone calls, emails or messages on social media from bosses at any time, represents an obstacle to the necessary mental disconnection from work and can imply psychological risks such as increased stress.

In fact, there are already pathologies such as the so-called work techno-stress, “nomophobia” (irrational fear of being without a mobile phone), which is not foreign to Cubans, and others derived from the constant, undosed use of new technologies.

Since February last year, the World Health Organization also pointed out in the words of Dr. María Neira, Director of the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Health, that “since the beginning of the pandemic, it has been very clear that teleworking can easily provide health benefits, but it can also have a harmful effect.

“Which way the balance tips depends entirely on governments, employers and workers working together, and on agile and imaginative occupational health services, to put in place policies and practices that benefit both workers and works.”

Disconnection is Rest



Legal consultant Lydia Guevara Ramírez, member of the Cuban Society of Labor Law and Social Security of the National Union of Jurists of Cuba, elaborates on the subject in her interesting article *The digital disconnection. Need for your protection*.

By the way, the researcher of labor issues and university professor also states that the right to digital disconnection aims to preserve the physical, mental, and emotional health of the human being, as a worker, providing him with the necessary space for rest, in order to create a balance between your personal and work life.

“It’s a right that goes directly against an abusive practice that has already become common in many organizations (...). It’s simply about respect for daily and weekly rest time and vacations, which must be included in the employment contract,” the expert emphasizes and adds that the current equivalent of the right to rest is the right to digital disconnection due to the presence increasingly widespread of remote work in its different variants.

In the case of Cuba, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security approved Resolution No. 71 in 2021 that established the Regulations for remote work and teleworking. In its article 10 (subsection g) it specifies that the terms for the delivery of the work result must be regulated, so that the planned tasks do not hinder the worker’s rest time.

Our country is moving towards the computerization of society, hence teleworking and similar variants are not something temporary left by the terrible Pandemic. That’s why, because it’s still a novelty, there is a demand for research and studies that contribute, in the words of Guevara Ramírez, to “a safe work environment, both in terms of their mental health, in the sense of physical and psychosocial well-being and not the absence of disease.” In this, the Right to disconnection will always have a relevant space.

Translated by Amilkal Labañino / CubaSí Translation Staff
