

Portugal Introduces New Law to Improve Work-Life Balance

November, 2021

Vocabulary

ban (verb)

'bæn

to prohibit, not permit or allow something to happen

*Smoking is **banned** in pubs, clubs and restaurants in Europe.*

fine (verb)

faɪn

to pay an amount of money as a punishment for not obeying a rule or law

*My neighbour was **fined** £50 for dropping rubbish in the park!*

balance (noun)

'bæ.ləns

a situation or state where things are equal, or exist in correct amounts

*Sometimes it's hard to have a **balance** between family life and work.*

remote (adjective)

ri'məʊt

done from a distance

*A lot of companies now employ **remote** workers from all over the world.*

interrupt (verb)

ˌɪn.tə'rʌpt

to suddenly disturb or cause a break in a process or action in progress

*Stop **interrupting** me when I'm speaking!*

isolated (adjective)

'aɪ.sə.leɪ.tɪd

without much contact with other people

*When I first moved abroad, I felt quite **isolated**.*

attract (verb)

ə'trækt

to make someone or something come closer or be interested in something

*Barcelona's art, culture and architecture **attracts** many tourists to the city.*

legislation (noun)

ˌledʒ.ɪ'sleɪ.ʃən

a set of laws put in place by a government or official organisation

*The new **legislation** that has been introduced will improve road safety.*

Portugal Introduces New Law to Improve Work-Life Balance

Portugal has **banned** bosses from contacting staff outside of working hours as part of its new 'right to rest' law. The new law means that companies with more than 10 employees could get **fined** if they contact staff after their working hours, unless it is because of an emergency.

The new law hopes to protect employees' right to a healthy work-life **balance**. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a large increase in **remote** working. As a result, many people's personal time is being **interrupted** by 'work time'.

There are other changes also, which include more support for parents with young children. They will no longer have to ask for their company's permission to work from home if their children are under 8 years old. Companies will also have to help pay for some of their staff's home electricity and internet bills, and to prevent workers feeling **isolated**, there must be a meeting in the office at least once every two months.

Government minister Ana Mendes Godinho told the Web Summit technology conference in Lisbon that she hopes the new rules will also help **attract** more remote workers from abroad. She said that she believes Portugal is one of the best places in the world for remote workers to live.

Other countries already have similar laws as those in Portugal. Not working or answering messages from your employer outside of work hours is protected by law in France, Spain, the Philippines and India.

According to research company Gartner, about 32% of employees worldwide could be working remotely by the end of 2021, compared to just 17% in 2019. If this happens, more employment **legislation** may have to be introduced around the world to adapt to the new pressures of working at home.

Questions

1. All companies in Portugal have to obey the 'right to rest' law.

TRUE / FALSE / NO INFORMATION GIVEN

2. Why has Portugal introduced their new law?

3. How does the new law benefit parents with young children?

4. Companies will have to pay for all of their employees electricity and internet bills.

TRUE / FALSE / NO INFORMATION GIVEN

5. What percentage of employees worldwide worked remotely in 2019, according to Gartner?

6. France, Spain, India and the Philippines all have the same law as Portugal.

TRUE / FALSE / NO INFORMATION GIVEN

Discussion

1. What are your thoughts on Portugal's 'right to rest' law?
2. Does your employer allow you to work from home? How many days?
3. Do you enjoy working from home?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of home working?
5. Is it common for employers to contact workers outside of working hours in your job, or in your culture in general?
6. When you're working day is finished, do you continue working?
7. How much of your free time away from work do you think you spend doing things that are related to work; looking at emails for example?
8. Do you think your employer offers a good work-life balance? Why /Why not?
9. Do you find it surprising that 32% of employees worldwide could be working remotely by the end of the year?
10. If you had a fully remote job, what countries would you consider working in?

Answers: 1. FALSE, 2. to protect employees' right to a healthy work-life balance, 3. parents of young children under 8 years old will no longer have to ask for permission to work from home, 4. FALSE, 5. 17%, 6. FALSE.