

Staff feedback on **Union Syndicale** flyer regarding the 'Right to Disconnect' from email after working hours

- *Good and very important initiative! Increasingly, indirectly, management is putting pressure on staff to have access to work e-mail on your private phone or access at home, so that you can be reached at all times. If you decide to refuse to install it and/or only access on working days and working hours, it will negatively affect their perception of your dedication/performance and thus your career.*
- *The problem is that since we are all different for certain individuals it may relieve them from stress to have access and thus know what is going on, while for many others it constitutes an interruption which does not allow for a disconnection from work during leave and evenings/weekend.*
- *I strongly believe that the below article should be a rule and Commission should be an example for every institution/company. Fact that the communication nowadays is easier than ever before, should not give a right to colleagues/managers/directors to disturb our time off (during holidays, evenings or being sick- which happens as well). It is not healthy to be obliged or feel pressure to check our professional inboxes, once we are out of the office. This rule should be clear and respected.*
- *Unless in such a case of emergency or justified practical necessity, the Code of Conduct should stipulate that no one can be REQUIRED to reply to such emails, or to accept meeting requests sent at 10pm for 8 or 9 am the next morning (this happened). If everyone is aware and accepts this principle, then it is a matter of common sense and mutual, as well as self-respect, to know when a response is required and when it is just a matter of convenience for both sides. In no circumstance should anyone be sanctioned in any way for not having read and replied to after hour emails.*
- *I imagine that if I were a manager, I would like to be free to send emails whenever I can, but would make it clear that this does not mean people must respond to it right away, or I would make a clear apology if such a necessity did occur for exceptional and major reasons.*
- *Now, can we trust our managers to have that kind of respect and common sense? If not, then some more binding solution could indeed be explored,*

without losing the advantages nonetheless. But let's hope that a code of conduct, proper training and awareness raising would be sufficient.

- *Nice idea in principle, but this will be difficult to enforce, at least if one only uses your proposal. For emails, it may be better to automate this for all staff. The German car industry, not typically known for inefficiency or lax working conditions, has on a voluntary basis adopted email policies for disconnect times. VW stops routing emails after a certain time in the evening (not applicable to senior management): <http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-16314901>. Daimler deletes emails when a person is on holidays: <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-28786117>. Note that the above technical measures only apply to emails and other channels that can be controlled by corporate IT. Therefore, a more comprehensive approach may be needed.*
- *In my opinion, the stress resulting from not disconnecting isn't so much about electronic devices but more to do with unrealistic demands in terms of unclear management direction, volume of work and short deadlines. It seems as if written messages putting on pressure are sometimes avoided, perhaps because they can provide proof of unrealistic demands?*
- *Rather than forbidding after hour communication, there should be a charter or code of conduct to be embraced by anyone with a managerial role (or anyone for that matter), that replies are not required unless there is a real case of emergency or justified practical necessity. It could be added to the charter we all sign for a corporate or private device. This is my point of view as a desk officer:*
- *It is useful to be informed of cancelled or added meetings (how many times have we rushed to a 9am meeting only to find it was cancelled), or to anticipate an urgent request so that you know what awaits you the next morning.*
- *It is useful if someone chooses to work on a weekend or on a sleepless night, or as a flexibility arrangement (e.g. you need to tend to your kids in the afternoon, but then work on a project in the evening). We are genuinely committed to our jobs, and it is not necessarily always a burden to sometimes give it a few extra hours. Full support on raising this point. Although my hierarchy has no expectations for a reply at 23:00 I do receive urgent requests which creates a feeling of anxiety and stress. Stress at*

work is already very high in my position – resulting in anxiety-induced insomnia.

- *Merci pour ce message tout à fait approprié. Personnellement, c'est pour sauvegarder ce droit à une vie privée déconnectée du bureau que j'ai toujours, malgré les demandes de l'administration, refusé de communiquer mon numéro de téléphone portable à mon employeur. Je considère que le téléphone portable relève de ma vie privée. De ce fait, je n'ai pas la possibilité de me connecter à mes e-mails professionnels en dehors de mon bureau... C'est une protection ! Bien sûr, l'administration vous dit que communiquer votre numéro de portable, c'est pour notre sécurité si... il arrivait quelque chose... Je ne me suis pas laissé convaincre !!*
- *Great idea! I heard on BBC World that the tendency has started going in the right direction. People who preserve their private life are now being considered to be better employees/managers. This is because it is considered an indication of the fact that do their work in a more professional way. People who cannot disconnect are considered at risk and disorganised. Keep up the good work!*
- *That's exactly the reason why I will NEVER enrol my private smartphone in the DIGIT's MDM and I will NEVER sync professional Outlook messages with my own device.*
- *Emails from EC SECURITY must of course go through but that should not really stop you from a sensible proposal. Safety of life should of course be exempt from such provisions. And emails about summits, "demonstrations in the Schumann quarter" and "closure of tunnel X" do not really provoke work related stress. That's even more true when you are at home or on vacation. So some generic services to be defined in advance should be able to send emails despite other provisions.*
- *Votre tract est assez interpellant car effectivement j'ai connu cela lors de ma carrière professionnelle! Une chef d'unité qui envoie des sms en dehors des heures de travail pour demander de me brancher avec l'environnement télétravail, des heures sup constantes, des arrivées à la maison le vendredi vers 20h00 avec un coup de téléphone de ma chef me demandant de régler un problème et des week-ends raccourcis par des départs en mission le dimanche. Tout ceci implique des discussions de couple car même au restaurant en soirée être souvent dérangée par des coups de téléphone ou*

des sms, les enfants qui se sentent un peu "abandonnés", une vie familiale bancal car beaucoup trop peu de temps passé en famille et un épuisement physique et moral qui pointent à l'horizon.

- *Rhetorical question: why should the duty fall on you to list such exceptions, instead of falling onto DG HR?*
- *Au cours de la dernière semaine, ont reçu des e-mails / appels téléphoniques à partir de votre hiérarchie (ou collègues) en dehors des heures normales de bureau (définir, 20:00?, W-e, vacances, etc.) qui nécessitent une réponse / travail immédiat? Combien de fois (une fois, 2-5 fois, plus de 5)? Même question sur une plus longue période de temps, par exemple. un mois, etc .Le questionnaire ne peut pas être improvisé, nous devons penser. Nous essayons de tirer toutes les idées. Demain, ce sera aussi parler avec des collègues.*
- *My approach to this is that I keep a strict separation between work and private life. Of course I do not have a management position so it is easier for me to do this. I do not want work to invade my private life. This is the way to remain mentally healthy. There have to be times when you are disconnected from work. Not only because it helps avoiding a burn-out but also because it makes you more productive at work. Your brain functions better when it can have a rest from time to time so there need to be moments when you do not think about work at all. So being disconnected actually improves the quality of our work. Volkswagen turns off its mail-server every evening at 18h. They turn it on again in the morning. One can still write mails after 18h but they'll be delivered only the next morning.*
- *Par ailleurs, pour votre information, la Commission a décidé de supprimer les "token". Donc, celle ou celui qui travaille de chez lui doit faire enregistrer son téléphone mobile ou sa tablette. Cela signifie d'une part que ceux qui n'ont ni téléphone mobile ni tablette ne peuvent plus (à partir du 1er janvier 2017) se connecter à distance et d'autre part que ceux qui ont un de ces deux appareils peut être contacté par sa hiérarchie n'importe quand.*
- *I think that this is very necessary. I work on web and social media and I have received mobile devices for work. Now my boss expects me to check my mail in the weekend 5 times a day for requests in case I have to publish on social media. I have tried to explain that I do not get paid for work in the*

weekend. He wants me to do it anyway and he has also told me that if I don't like it I should find another job.

- *I agree with this being a very important issue in today's work environment. I don't like when my husband does it and certainly my husband and children are unhappy if I'm checking work things in the evening (or even worse on holiday). Thanks for proposing to take action on this and to establish clearer parameters.*
- *Depuis que j'éteins mon téléphone de service quand je quitte le bureau suite au conseil d'un coach à la Commission, mon état de santé (stress – burnout niveau 1), ma vie privée mais également mon efficacité au travail selon mes supérieurs hiérarchiques s'est nettement améliorée.*