

Disconnection – ESSDE 26 March '25 -Flemish education

1. 1. Founded at the level of Belgium in 2018

<p>New legislation on prevention of burnout and disconnection With some new measures, the government wants to reduce the risk of burnouts. And make employers and employees aware of the risks of continuous (online) availability.</p>	
<p>On 22 March 2018, the Recovery Act or Law on the Strengthening of Economic Growth and Social Cohesion was approved.</p>	
<p>The section Consultation on disconnection and use of digital means of communication stipulates that Committees for Prevention at Work must consult on disconnection from work and the use of digital means of communication at regular intervals, and whenever requested by the workers' representatives</p>	
<p>In doing so, the government wants to ensure respect for employees' rest periods, annual leave and other leave. And safeguard the work-life balance. On the basis of the consultations, the Committee can formulate proposals to the employer and issue opinions. If agreements follow from this, they can be included in the work regulations or in a collective labour agreement</p>	

- However, these provisions apply only to the private sector. CLA XII now fills this gap for the education sector: it calls on the social partners to map out the consequences for well-being and prevention and to draw up an agreement framework by 1/1/2022 with which schools can get started.

- A similar passage also occurs in CLA V (basic education for adults) and CLA VI (Higher education).

2. Negotiations at the Flemish level on disconnection started with the input of experts (2022)

Example. Hendrik Delagrang, Researcher, SERV:(Social and Economic Council of Flanders)	
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| Agreed framework is important | |
| Giving sufficient attention to integrators: they can also experience stress | |
| Be careful with "it can vary from school to school". Mostly universal problems. | |
| Aim of policy: to reconcile the framework of agreements and the autonomy of staff members. | |
| Point of attention: definition of working time in a school context | |
| Shutting down servers at a certain time does not work: People want autonomy and are looking for a way out (whatsapp, dropbox) via Shadow-IT! | |
| Making agreements about what goes through informal channels (whatsapp) and what goes through professional channels | . |
| Not disconnecting is not a question of the employer but of the employee's choice. | |
| If no standard is drawn up, a descriptive standard is created. | |
| It is therefore important to make agreements yourself, to suppress the descriptive norm | |

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| <p>-Tips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Don't wait for integration into PSR policy (good principle). Start right away. o Blocking mails, not a good idea. But raise awareness. Better agreements about the time of sending. | |
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o Discuss emergency situations. For example, calling on a mobile phone number. o Managers must set a good example. Social contacts are important. Don't just block	
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Attention to other actors	
Primary attention to teaching staff	
It's good that all communication channels have been mapped out. Good to choose 1 communication channel at school: not both a smart school, and letters, and email and whatsapp,...	
Agreements must be clearly standardized. Formulate strictly, not without obligation. Agreements per 'category': parents, staff members	

Cindy Moons/ Ralf Caers, professors, KULeuven	
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Strong need to disconnect after 17.00 – after 20.00	
Working during evenings and weekends = mentally unhealthy	
Disconnection important but not easy to implement. People sometimes want to work	
Workload is the biggest problem	
Want to see the possibilities of teleworking? – clear agreements	
Research Work life separation / integration	
1/5 can divorce, 1/6 nicely balanced, 64% think balance is not OK (figures 2022)	
Agreements too non-committal. Working in a normative way.	
Communicate agreements when hiring! Do you fit into this policy?	

Respecting rest time: need to recovery: workload must be borne as much as possible within working hours. If not: Vicious circle in which capacity decreases	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We have to protect people from themselves. Switching/transition moments are important. 	
Whatsapp groups not so innocent. Appointments with colleagues quickly become work.	
Need a policy on social media? Does that policy suit the employees?	
Important to have good ICT equipment and good knowledge use platforms	

After negotiations between government – employers – trade unions

<p>Agreement on the deconnection framework AT CENTRAL LEVEL = Flemish level</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All social partners endorse the importance of agreements on digital means of communication in our education, with the aim of being able to use them to relieve teaching staff as well as pupils/course participants and parents, not to burden them. That is why all social partners are committed to having their respective administrations and representatives arrive at a local agreement framework. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational institutions give the local agreement framework a clear place within the preventive welfare policy of their educational institution. They pay sufficient attention to the impact of (de)connectivity on psychosocial well-being, raising awareness about the importance of of deconnectivity, and strive for a healthy school culture around this theme. Digital communication tools are intended as a tool to support staff in performing their duties. Educational institutions are making maximum use of the benefits of digital means of communication and ensure that they do not cause additional workload. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital communication tools are typically used by all actors in a educational institution. Involve in the preparation of (the) local agreement framework(s) educational institutions, in addition to the staff, also all other actors involved or their representatives (pupils, course participants, parents,...). 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least the following themes will be included in the local agreement framework: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Keep message flow manageable o Timing of sending messages o Timing of reading and replying to messages o Use of social media within a professional context o Communication and accessibility in case of illness o Communication and accessibility in the case of part-time work o Communication and accessibility in case of force majeure and during emergencies o Communication and accessibility during holiday periods 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Educational institutions ensure that all actors in their institution have sufficient information and knowledge to use the means of communication in a correct and accordance with the local framework of agreements and integrate the programmes into their respective professionalization plan.. They also provide the necessary facilities so that staff members, pupils and trainees, in the educational establishment and during school hours, have access to, and can use the digital means of communication.	
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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Educational institutions communicate clearly about the local agreements and already communicate during the recruitment of new staff members about the agreement framework	
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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Educational institutions take into account the presence of shadow IT1 (whatsapp, fb, ...) and make all stakeholders aware of their responsibility in the use of this. The competent local committees give concrete substance to these centrally made agreements.	
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