

## Ireland

### Introduction to Work-Life Balance

According to the OECD Better Life Index in Ireland (OECD, n.d.), some 5% of employees work very long hours in paid work, much less than the OECD average of 10%. In Ireland, full-time workers devote 61% of their day on average, or 14.5 hours, to personal care (eating, sleeping, etc.) and leisure (socialising with friends and family, hobbies, games, computer, and television use, etc.) – less than the OECD average of 15 hours.

In Ireland, the average working week must not exceed a maximum of 48 hours for many employees, in accordance with the European Working Time Directive. Employees are also entitled to a 15-minute break after 4 hour's work and a further 15-minute break after a 6-hour work period. These breaks are unpaid. Increasingly over the last 10 years, more employers in Ireland started to address the issue of work life balance, to bring benefits (Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission , n.d.) for themselves and their workforce. Companies sought to attract and retain employees by introducing policies that address work-life balance. The main work-life balance policies in Ireland are annual leave, maternity and paternity leave, parental leave, adoptive leave, carer leave, flexible working hours (Citizens Information, n.d.) and so on. As of October 2022, the Irish government has brought the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill 2022 (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2022) to the second stage which will see some of these measures extended further to improve family friendly work practices and support women in the workplace.

Post Covid-19, in 2021 the Central Statistics Office in Ireland (CSO , 2022) conducted a Personal and Work-Life Balance Survey which showed a shift in work-life balance following the increase in remote working. Workers who were working mostly from home with a mix of office, hub or travel were most satisfied at 94.2% with both their job and life as a whole. The creation of virtual teams or working from home are new ways of work-life balancing.



## Policies / Research on the effects of WLB

### **The Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill 2022**

The Irish government are in the process of approving The Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill 2022, (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2022). It proposes several legislative changes which are designed to allow for a better work life balance for parents and carers, to encourage more equal sharing of parental leave between men and women and ultimately to try and improve the representation of women in the labour market. Some of the key proposals under the Bill include:

- Right to request flexible working
- Leave for medical care purposes
- Extension of the period during which time can be taken out from work to breastfeed
- Extension of maternity leave entitlements to transgender men

Once implemented employers will need to review and amend their family and caring leave policies to ensure they are compliant with the new legislation. As with the right to request remote work, the government will seek to issue guidance to employers on how to handle requests for flexible working arrangements and that policies will be required or recommended. (Hynes, 2022)

### **The Right to Request Remote Working Bill 2021**

In January 2022, the Irish government published details of a new law giving workers the right to request remote working. During the pandemic, many workers had to work from home, and they had no choice on the matter. Following the lifting of restrictions, the government sought to clarify the position for employees and employers. The Right to Request Remote Working Bill 2021 (Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment, 2022) provides a legal framework around terms for requesting, approving or refusing a request for remote work can be based.



All workplaces must have a written statement which sets out the company's Remote Working Policy, specifying the way remote working requests are managed and the conditions which will apply to remote working within the organisation. Where the employer has completed the assessment process and any appeal is heard, the employee will have to wait a period of 12 months to submit another request, provided they are in the same role. If an employee moves to a new role within the company, they may submit a fresh request.

The new law provides for a time-limit for an employer to return a decision in relation to a request from an employee. The employer can set out their own specific time limit, but it must not be more than 12 weeks. An employee will be eligible to submit a request once they have worked for their employer for a period of six months. However, an employer is free to offer remote work from day one if desired. There is a right of appeal to the Workplace Relations Commission where an employer has failed to respond to a request or to provide any reasonable grounds for refusal of a request for remote working and protections for employees from penalisation for having exercised their entitlement to request remote working.

### **Code of Practice on Right to Disconnect**

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021, all Irish employees were officially granted the Right to Disconnect (gov.ie, 2021) from work and have a better work-life balance, after the government brought in a new Code of Practice for the right to disconnect. Part of the rationale for this commitment is to create more flexible family-friendly working arrangements, including working from home and working more flexible hours.

The Right to Disconnect gives employees the right to switch off from work outside of normal working hours, including the right to not respond immediately to emails, telephone calls or other messages. There are three rights enshrined in the Code

- the right of an employee to not have to routinely perform work outside their normal working hours



- the right not to be penalised for refusing to attend to work matters outside of normal working hours
- the duty to respect another person’s right to disconnect (for example: by not routinely emailing or calling outside normal working hours)

However, there is **no formal Right to Disconnect** under Irish or European law. This Code of Practice provides practical guidance for employers and employees to assist in meeting existing obligations under existing legislation. The full code is available to view here: [code-of-practice-for-employers-and-employees-on-the-right-to-disconnect.pdf \(workplacerelations.ie\)](https://www.workplacerelations.ie/code-of-practice-for-employers-and-employees-on-the-right-to-disconnect.pdf)

## Initiatives

### The Changemakers Programme

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Topic/ Area  
Title



Supporting remote worker engagement and social impact

#### The Changemakers Programme

- Training Programme  
The Changemakers programme supports 3 levels of engagement for achieving Grow Remote’s social mission of making remote employment visible and accessible. Changemakers are invited to get involved in Grow Remote as either Remote Advocates, Experts or Chapter Leads.

Type of Initiative

Remote Advocates are individuals who wish to fly the flag for remote work in their own unique way, using their individual talent and giving as much or as little time as they see fit. This impact may take the form of a simple conversation with a friend, a series of school talks, or a one-off jobs fair for remote workers.

Chapter Leads are individuals with a deep investment in their local area and a drive to make sustainable grassroots change through remote employment. Grow Remote offers funding (up to €1,000 per chapter), one-to-one support and the opportunity to change their locality for good.



Experts are people with an established expertise in the remote ecosystem or the future of work who wish to contribute their time towards Grow Remote’s mission. This may involve representing Grow Remote at an international conference, all expenses paid.

<b>Date released</b>	October 2022
<b>Partners/ network</b>	Grow Remote
<b>Description of the methods/ approach</b>	A Grow Remote changemaker is an individual with a shared passion for Grow Remote’s social mission to make remote employment local and volunteers their time, energy or talent towards achieving it.
<b>Purpose/Aim</b>	To promote remote working regionally in Ireland.
<b>Evaluation (results) of its effectiveness (if applicable)</b>	This programme has just launched so there are no results to evaluate yet.
<b>Web link</b>	<a href="#">Launching the Changemakers programme - Grow Remote</a>
<b>References/ online sources</b>	<a href="#">(2) Post   LinkedIn</a>
<b>Additional notes</b>	Playbook available to download here: <a href="#">Changemakers - Grow Remote</a>

## Distilled

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<b>Topic/ Area</b>	Online classified specialist company who offer a wide range of employee benefits for work-life balance and well-being.
<b>Title</b>	Distilled
<b>Type of Initiative</b>	Benefits include fully paid parental leave, wellness programmes, workplace flexibility, tuition support and competitive compensation. Company makes itself attractive to employees with the range of benefits.
<b>Date released</b>	Continuous
<b>Partners/ network</b>	Employees
<b>Description of the methods/ approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility to work from home or hybrid.</li> <li>• Employees given every Friday in August as leave to relax.</li> <li>• Social activities, get togethers, hiking, birthday gifts, breakfast</li> </ul>



- Access to employee & family to doctor. Calm app.
- Employee Assistance programme & wellness survey.
- Paid leave for parents, flexible working arrangements.
- Additional time off for special moments: wedding, buying house, child's first day of school etc..

<b>Purpose/Aim</b>	To attract and retain employees in a competitive marketplace.
<b>Evaluation (results) of effectiveness (if applicable)</b>	Employee testimonials and profile interviews: <a href="#">Meet Our Distiller: Katerina Rygolova! - Distilled - Medium</a>
<b>Web link</b>	<a href="#">Our Benefits (distilled.ie)</a>
<b>References/ online sources</b>	<a href="#">Life at Distilled - YouTube</a>

## HR Policies at an Irish University, UCC

[Place the logo of the project/ initiative or other image of the best practice]



<b>Topic/ Area</b>	Supporting employees with well being and family friendly policies.
<b>Title</b>	HR Policies at an Irish university, UCC
<b>Type of Initiative</b>	A broad range of benefits for employees with a focus on wellbeing; including study leave, recognition awards, concessions, a staff well being plan. Other benefits are family friendly, including a returners scheme for women returning after maternity leave, parental leave, carer's leave etc.
<b>Date released</b>	Continue to be added to.
<b>Partners/ network</b>	UCC employees only
<b>Description of the methods/ approach</b>	A full range of benefits for staff
<b>Purpose/Aim</b>	To encourage staff retention.
<b>Evaluation (results) of effectiveness (if applicable)</b>	Not available but it may be possible to ask UCC HR for further information on the policies and their uptake.
<b>Web link</b>	<a href="#">Policies   University College Cork (ucc.ie)</a>

## My family Care: solutions to make family & work for business and people



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**MY FAMILY CARE+**

**Topic/ Area**

Employee benefits for work-life balance and well-being

**Title**

My Family Care: solutions to make family + work for business and people.

**Type of Initiative**

Private company supplying 'back up care' to large corporate clients (employers) to support work-life balance and wellbeing in their workplaces.

Back up care includes a wide range of supports e.g., Parental Leave Toolkit for employees & employers.

**Date released**

Ongoing

**Partners/ network**

Employers such as: Sky, IBM, Deloitte, P&G etc..

**Description of the methods/ approach**

Case studies of success stories available to free download.

Toolkits

Resources for employees and employers

**Purpose/Aim**

Employee satisfaction, employee wellbeing, and retention based on a pricing model for employers.

**Evaluation (results) of its effectiveness (if applicable)**

Testimonials on website

**Web link**

[My Family Care | Work+Family Solutions for Employers](#)