

COVID-19 and Labour Regulations

Sweden – Foyen

1. OBLIGATION TO WORK

Despite COVID-19, employees in Sweden still have obligation to work. How and where an employee works is agreed between employer and employee. If an employee has had symptoms of COVID-19, he or she is obliged to stay at home. In some cases when an employee needs to be in quarantine, work can be achieved from home, in some cases not.

2. RIGHT TO TELEWORK

The employer must approve to remote work. The Swedish state has encouraged employers to enable employees to work from home in cases where it is possible to do so.

3. HEALTH AND SAFETY

It is the employer's responsibility to provide a good work environment. This can be an issue and some employers have found it challenging to have control over the work environment when employees work remotely, as the employer still has this responsibility. It can be expensive for the employer to ignore the work environment, as the employer can receive sanction fees if it breaches the provisions of the work environment regulations.

4. FURLOUGH BENEFITS

The Swedish Government presented a crisis package regarding short-time working aimed at companies that may be financially affected by the coronavirus outbreak, as the companies must be able to retain their employees, in the same way that employees should be able to keep their jobs. What the crisis package offers is an opportunity for companies to receive financial support from the State to reduce their salary costs by as

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much as half, while employees agree to reduce their wages and working hours but are still able to receive more than 90% of their salary.

It has been substantially three levels of working time reduction to choose from: 20, 40 or 60 %. This means that for the employer, the reduction in salary costs would result in 19, 36 or 53 % savings respectively through the support package, depending on the working time reduction applied. For employees, their reduction of salary leads to 4, 6 or 7,5 %.

If the workplace does not have a collective agreement, at least 70 % of employees must accept short-term work if employer wants to apply for it.

5. COVID-19 AND HEADCOUNT REDUCTION

In Sweden, there is no possibility of temporarily laying off staff to reduce the employer's personnel costs. An employee who is temporarily laid-off is entitled to the same salary and other employment benefits as if the employee had been allowed to keep his / her duties. In the event of a lack of work, which COVID-19 has caused for many companies, there are legal grounds for dismissal with a notice period in accordance with Swedish law.

Contact:

Cecilia Hagman – [Linked In](#)

Email: cecilia.hagman@foyen.se

www.foyen.se ([LinkedIn](#))

www.plg.eu.com ([LinkedIn](#))