



Republic of Labour Law – Irish HR Updates in March

By **Dónall Breen** - 31 March 2020

Welcome to our March edition of Republic of Labour Law, a monthly newsletter in which we distil the most important Irish legal and HR updates from the last month in 500 words or less.

For those of you who do business in Ireland, this should be your one stop shop for what you need to know.

This week in the Republic of Labour Law:

- Covid-19
- Nothing much else

What a difference a month makes. Last month we were drifting along as normal, discussing the various labour law updates. This month we have only one thing on our mind. Although you may well have prepared your response plan, we think it would be useful to set out the headline points of what you should be considering.

Travel

- Non-essential travel has been advised against, so if your employees can work from home they should.
- Ireland has not closed its borders, but there are quite a few restrictions in place (including a mandatory 14-day quarantine). Check the Department of Foreign Affairs website for latest updates.
- These restrictions do not apply to travel between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Employment

- For employers who may have to lay workers off, or put them on short working hours, you should apply for government assistance that will pay up to 70% of your employee's salary (subject to a cap, currently €410 per employee per week). See [here](#) for further details on the Wage Subsidy Scheme.
- There is no employer mandated sick pay in Ireland (like SSP in the UK), but the current 6-day waiting period for state Illness Benefit will not



apply to anyone who has Coronavirus or is in medically required self-isolation.

- Self-employed people can apply for the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment of €350 a week (see [here](#)).
- Unilaterally imposing shorter working hours, salary cuts and other measures are still (typically) a breach of contract so it is best to speak with your employees and get their consent if possible. However, the commercial reality is that this may not always be possible.

Data Protection

- If you are collecting health data from your employees e.g. their temperature, make sure you have considered on what legal basis under GDPR you are relying on. Your solicitor can help you with this.
- If your employees are working from home, ensure they are handling personal information appropriately i.e. consider purchasing a shredder for those in your HR department who may be printing confidential personal files.

These are just the headline points. If you are looking for information, we are happy to help and citizensinformation.ie is also a great resource (I would highly recommend it).

As you can imagine, there is not much else going on in the labour law world as we grapple with our new common enemy, but we will remain poised to update you as required.

Until next time, remember what our Irish grandmothers told us - ní neart go cur le chéile (there is no strength without unity).

For further information about responding to Covid-19 in Ireland, please see our Irish Employer FAQs [here](#).