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Chile advances in labor reform of 4 days per week and flexible schedules to gain quality of life: is it possible in Argentina?



While Chile proposes measures to reduce working hours, there are still industries in the country that refuse to be flexible. Pros and cons



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The crack between work and personal life is not so easy to close. The new generations seek a well-paid job, which is passionate but, at the same time, allows more free time to devote to physical and mental well-being.

Experts say that it is proven that those who enjoy certain flexibilities and have a greater number of hours to spend outside the office, end up being more "loyal" to their employers.

There are several companies that already contemplate these policies, under the premise that they will achieve a better working environment and an increase in productivity. Developed countries have regulatory frameworks that promote the work-life balance, with options for reduced working hours and home office several days a week, depending on the type of work.

These types of benefits come hand in hand with new technologies, which:

- Enable people to be connected at any time and place
- They generate a substantial saving of time: those tasks that years ago required several hours or days, now can be realized much faster

Thus, progress is beginning to emerge in the region to face time flexibility. For example, Chile or Peru have already begun to propose new forms of work.

Chile kicks the board: fewer hours, more quality of life

On May 2, the Chilean government presented new labor changes that revolve around three fundamental axes: work, family and inclusion.

This initiative, which will be discussed in Congress, modifies the working day with the purpose of people having a better quality of life. It establishes new standards that guarantee the protection of workers and promote an inclusive labor world.

Among the modifications include:

- Weekday: enables to provide services from Monday to Thursday and rest Friday, Saturday and Sunday
- Monthly day (180 hours): possibility to agree on a flexible distribution of days and hours
- Half-yearly and annual conferences: work more in winter and less in summer (or vice versa)
- Time of entry and exit: you can agree "blocks schedules" to accommodate working time to the needs



Flexibility is voluntary and allows two new modalities: 4 days worked and 3 days off with 45 hours of weekly stop, or 180 monthly hours with a maximum of 12 hours a day and up to 6 days a week.

Thus, the trans-Andean country aims to agglutinate itself to the new forms that demand jobs of the XXI Century, having as pillars the protection of the workers and the promotion of an inclusive labor world that opens opportunities for all.

For Carlos Slim, it's the future

The Mexican Carlos Slim, owner of Claro, is also another one who believes that today's technologies are not the same as before and that the world should go to work weeks of 4 days, and even three.

"They already do it in some Asian countries, where people are going to work less, we have to organize ourselves in the West and go to the office only three or four days a week," he says.

The argument of the telecommunications tycoon, and one of the richest men in the world, is based on two pillars:

- People should have well-being and spend their time in other things so that they perform better in their jobs
- Give more opportunities for progress to those who must enter the labor market

Slim, not only says it but puts it into practice in their companies: those who are close to retirement age work four days a week (without seeing their salaries reduced) while others attend three days.

"You should have more time for yourself throughout your life, not when you reach 65 and retire," he emphasizes. In this way, he explains, there will be more space for recreation, family and training activities.

The rest of the world advances in flexible days

This debate is replicated throughout the world. One of the most cited experiments on happiness linked to working fewer hours is the one elaborated by the University of Warwick, in the United Kingdom. After cutting the workday in different ways (days or hours), they all improved their stress and health levels up to two years after the trial ended.

In 2015, Sweden initiated a pilot test in the city of Gothenburg: 70 people went from having a day of 8 to 6 hours: they missed less due to illness and improved their productivity substantially. Also in the United Kingdom, the company Radioactive PR cut the work week to four days and found that productivity is concentrated from Tuesday to Thursday.



more losses were recorded. Meanwhile, Germany's metalworkers managed to get employees to serve only 28 hours a week. The decision was more related to productivity and its adaptation to the automation of processes.

Experience in Argentina

Although in Argentina the debate is not installed, some companies have made progress towards fewer hours of work or flexible systems. Eventbrite is one of them: at a local level it encourages work by objectives and from that it defines its day.

"The company has a flexible methodology as part of the work contract, which has nothing to do with the workload but with the responsibilities to be met by the team," explains Victoria Calabró, Workplace Specialist.

Although they have a time range from 9 to 18, this does not imply that each employee marks a card, since each one is handled with their respective managers.

"We allow teleworking, although we do not have an established policy like other companies that, for example, define one day a week to make a home office," says Calabró.

In Eventbrite, every need is notified on the day and is worked from outside the office without restriction, although each manager and the human resources sector are attentive to how many home office days are requested per month and if the objectives are met.

"There are leaders dedicated to the constant monitoring of people and performance is measured, which allows certain freedoms to be allowed," he adds.

In terms of productivity, absenteeism was reduced to a minimum, since the possibility of dynamic hours and home office opens the door for employees to continue working. "The new generations demand this and choose to work in flexible companies, and they show a greater degree of commitment," says Calabró.

Is it possible in Argentina "chilean" working day?

According to the Randstad Workmonitor report of 2018, seven out of every 10 Argentines work under a traditional scheme in which all employees attend the office at regular times.

In comparative terms, the study highlights that the country is among the nations that still maintain "rigid" work formats. Until last year, only 34% could perform their tasks in the place and time desired.

In addition, according to the research, eight out of 10 believe that if they were allowed a more flexible format they would improve creativity, productivity and the level of satisfaction with work.



facilitates the integration of people to the formal market.

However, in a context of recession and with an unemployment rate of around 9%, according to INDEC, specialists believe that this is not the best time to address some issues.

"The heterogeneity of the Argentine labor market also appears as an obstacle to implementing these policies," said Matías Ghidini, general manager of the human resources consultancy GhidiniRodil.

"There are more dynamic industries and others more conservative, in which the definition of work by objectives is not installed," he adds. Among the most innovative appear, precisely, those in which the high demand and talent rotation forces, to retain them, to be more flexible: technology, software, systems, and profiles linked to the Internet and ecommerce, among others.

The regulations in force in the country were out of date compared to the requirements demanded by the new profiles. It is not surprising that in nations in crisis, such as Argentina, the results are different from those of developed countries, in which this aggrornation is already contemplated.

Alexandra Manera, director of Human Resources of Argentina & Uruguay of Adecco, remarks to iProUP: "The union gets involved a lot, there are sectors in which it is easier to advance in flexible systems". It considers that a short-time model must be applied according to the type of industry and category.

Juan Pablo Peries, manager of Inhouse Services of Randstad, believes that moving forward in a flexible system implies advantages for both parties: "Workers seek to spend more time developing other activities, while companies need more productivity. after certain times, efficiency falls," he says.

"We have to see how the trade unions deal with these issues, since they are increasingly aware that there are issues that must be reviewed, such as giving more flexibility without unprotecting the employees." The unions could become one of the drivers of change ", concludes the specialist.

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