

# WTS Global Mobility Newsletter



## #workfromanywhere - Time to balance the benefits and risks

Work from home and also #workfromanywhere is currently being discussed widely in organisations. As a consequence of the pandemic, virtual work from home became necessary and has now become more acceptable, and is currently being discussed as a post pandemic way of working.

Employees are increasingly demanding to extend their holidays abroad to work virtually, some want to stay with relatives abroad and international local hires who worked from home during the time when borders were closed, request to continue working from their home countries. HR Mobility teams are the ones who are overrun with such requests.

It is clear that a portion of the workforce sees a benefit in the possibility to work from anywhere. Also employers are currently discussing the issue, often also among HR leadership and top management, how offering virtual cross-border work could help them to improve their employer image, create a better employee experience and in turn attract and retain more talent, while staying competitive with their peers.

But while the benefits are being evaluated, the inherent risks, especially in the area of compliance, cannot be ignored. Especially mobility managers with a thorough understanding of these matters become painfully aware of the issue at hand.

We do have an unprecedented situation at hand, meaning we cannot simply benchmark an approach, looking across the fence to see what approach is successful. Ways of handling the situation, strategies and approaches to deal with the demand are differing widely and are just emerging. They range from some companies publicly announcing that everyone can work from anywhere, while others are simply forbidding for their workforce to work from any other country than their country of employment.

An appropriate approach has to balance the perceived benefits with the risks and needs to be adapted to what is right for your way of doing things in your organisation, your corporate culture. Consider who are the relevant stakeholders in your organisation that know best how necessary it is to allow or restrict #workfromanywhere based on how important benefits and risks of it are seen in your organisation.

Don't call it  
work from  
home - we  
work from  
anywhere  
now.

Source: Forbes

- **Simply forbidding it for all?** In this case you might miss out the benefits for your company and your employees that come with virtual cross-border work and risk to become uncompetitive.
- **Allowing it for all?** Like Spotify announced recently? Here you accept the responsibility for a wide range of risks for your company and your employees, while likely neglecting the duty of care for your employees.
- **Doing nothing** or simply ignoring the problem is also seen as defaulting your duty of care. Dealing with the risks as they materialise is unwise and leads potentially to administratively and cost intensive compliance breakdowns.

The right answer to the challenge, that is also what can be seen in the market, lies somewhere in between the above three - rather extreme - approaches. A sensible but restrictive way of allowing virtual cross-border work must be when risks are transparent and taken consciously to minimise surprises and ensure an efficient and consistent handling of employee demands. Some companies already reap the benefits with an approach where they accept to take calculated risks.



Many companies are currently working on strategies and approaches that manage them to handle the requests for work remotely from abroad in a consistent and effective manner, where the benefits and risks are balanced. Such an approach can only be defined with the right stakeholders who need an awareness for the risks as well as for the potential benefits. They also need an understanding of the potential ways how compliance risks can be mitigated and how other companies are starting to approach this.

Bringing together your key stakeholders to discuss the issue that are grounded in an understanding of the challenges, risks and feasible approaches at hand, lead to decisions on strategy, principles and approaches which reflect your company culture, meet your employee demands and protect the company from taking undue risks.

It is unknown to what degree virtual work in general will stay after the pandemic, but there is a wide agreement that we will not revert to a way of working like we did before the pandemic. But simply waiting to see how things develop and doing nothing seems to be an approach that can backfire for organisations. To address the topic has become more of a duty than a choice.

*WTS is teaming up with our business partner [Chris Debner](#), an award-winning mobility thought leader, to advise our clients on strategies and approaches for virtual cross-border work. The topic being a multidisciplinary effort makes us combine our compliance expertise and legal advice with the strategic and market expertise needed to effectively support our clients to define an approach that meets your exact needs. WTS is investing in researching the risk of virtual cross-border work and has trained our advisory teams in the skills and expertise needed to address the topic. Please feel to reach out to us if you see value in our support.*

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