

German minister backs creating legal right to work from home

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German Labor Minister Hubertus Heil attends a news conference about the situation at the job market at a time of coronavirus pandemic in Berlin, Germany, Tuesday, March 31, 2020. In order to slow down the spread of the coronavirus, the German government has considerably restricted public life and asked the citizens to stay at home. The new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people, but for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness or death. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber, Pool)

Germany's labor minister wants to enshrine into law the right to work from home if it is feasible to do so, even after the coronavirus pandemic subsides.

Labor Minister Hubertus Heil told Sunday's edition of the Bild am Sonntag newspaper that he aims to put forward such legislation this fall. He said initial estimates suggest the proportion of the work force working from home has risen from 12% to 25% during the virus crisis, to around 8 million people.

"Everyone who wants to and whose job allows it should be able to work in a home office, even when the corona pandemic is over," Heil was quoted as saying. "We are learning in the [pandemic](#) how much work can be done from home these days."

Heil stressed that "we want to enable more home working, but not force it." He said people could choose to switch entirely to working from home, or do so for only one or two days per week.

Heil's center-left Social Democrats, the junior partner in Chancellor Angela Merkel's governing coalition, had already called in December—long before the virus epidemic brought public life in Germany and elsewhere to a near-standstill—for the establishment of a right to work from home.

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