MODULE 1 CASE STUDY · SPAIN

The first eight weeks

Sofia, HR administrator at a 90-person retail group in Zaragoza. One situation, four national versions. This is the Spain version. About 45 minutes. Done alone.

Before you start

This is not legal advice. National detail is written as what to check and who to ask, never as settled law. Laws change: always read the current official text, or ask the bodies named. The people and the companies are fictional.

The situation

Sofia is eight weeks into her first HR role. She is an HR administrator at a 90-person retail group in Zaragoza, working from home four days a week, and she was hired from outside HR — six years in customer service, where she planned the rota, trained new starters and handled complaints; no HR qualification; a strong interview. Her manager, Rui, sits in another city and they speak twice a week for half an hour.

The advert said: "Hybrid. Flexible hours. Some home working possible." At the interview she was told she would work from home four days a week. Nothing about this is in her offer letter.

On paper it is going well. Her probation review last week was positive. Rui wrote that she is "extremely responsive" and "never lets anything sit".

What her week actually looks like

- She opens her laptop at 07:40 because it is on the kitchen table, and she answers messages until roughly 20:30 most days, in bursts, between everything else.
- Her calendar is fully booked. There are no gaps in it, and there is nothing in it named after her own work.
- The contracts and the record updates — the things with deadlines — get done between 18:00 and 20:00, after the queries stop.
- She replies to almost everything within two minutes. She has noticed that this is now expected, and she has not said anything about it.
- Last Thursday a grievance arrived that she did not expect. She spent four hours on it and finished the payroll checks at 22:15.

Three other things that are true

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1. The laptop is her own. The employer has not provided one and nobody has said when they will. Her partner and her older child also use it, on the same login.
2. To work on the monthly headcount report at home she has been emailing the spreadsheet — names, salaries, dates of birth — to her personal address, because the company VPN is unusable after 18:00.
3. Rui messages her most evenings, usually marked 'no rush'. She answers them. He has never asked her to.

What this case study is for

Sofia is not doing anything unusual. Every one of these behaviours is a reasonable local response to a missing structure, and together they add up to a person who will either burn out or cause an incident, probably within six months. Your job is to see the pattern before it resolves itself badly.

What to check, and who to ask — Spain

Each row is a question to check, not a ruling. Read the current text of the source, and ask the bodies named if you are unsure.

Question	What to check	Where to look	Who to ask
Is there a digital disconnection policy?	Employers are required to have an internal policy on digital disconnection, drawn up with staff representatives. Ask to see it. Its absence is itself a finding.	Internal disconnection policy · Ley 10/2021, art. 18	Your employer's HR · staff representatives
Is there a written telework agreement?	Regular remote work is governed by a specific regime with a required written agreement covering equipment, costs and hours. Establish whether one exists for Sofia.	Ley 10/2021, de trabajo a distancia (BOE, consolidated text)	Your employer's HR · Inspección de Trabajo y Seguridad Social
How are costs compensated?	The regime requires that remote working does not leave the worker out of pocket. What has been agreed, and is it being paid?	Ley 10/2021 · Sofia's remote work agreement	Your employer's HR · staff representatives
How is the daily working time register kept?	Daily recording of working time is mandatory and	Your employer's time-recording system · the	Your employer's HR · Inspección de Trabajo y

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	applies to remote workers. Ask how it works in practice when nobody starts and finishes in a building.	applicable convenio colectivo	Seguridad Social
Who is the supervisory authority for data protection?	The AEPD. Also check whether the company has a data protection officer and who it is.	Your employer's policies · GDPR	The data protection officer, if there is one · AEPD (Agencia Española de Protección de Datos)

Working here in practice

- The applicable convenio colectivo may set more than the statute does, including on hours and on availability. Find out which one applies before concluding anything.
- Works council or personnel delegates will expect to be involved in anything that changes working conditions across a group of staff.
- SEPE and the regional employment services run programmes for people returning to work or changing occupation.

Your tasks

About 45 minutes. Done alone. Short notes are enough; write them in your own words.

1. The advert and the agreement (lesson 1.1)

Sofia's advert said: "Hybrid. Flexible hours. Some home working possible." Her four home days were agreed at the interview but are not in her offer letter.

Which words in the advert are vague? What should Sofia have asked to see written down before she started?

2. Her experience as evidence (lesson 1.2)

Customer-service experience	The HR administration task it matches	The evidence she could give

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3. Separate the problems

There are at least three distinct problems here, and they need different responses. Name them, and say who owns each one: Sofia, Rui, or the employer.

The problem	Who owns it	Why it is theirs

The one change that should come first, and why it comes before the others

4. The data findings (lesson 1.4)

Three things in this case are unsafe handling of employee data. Find them, say what is wrong in one line each, and say what Sofia should do instead this week, with what she actually has.

What is happening	Why it is a problem	What she does instead, this week

Under what conditions could Sofia use her own laptop until the employer provides one? What would she ask for in writing?

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5. The sentence about the evenings (lesson 1.3)

What Sofia says to Rui about evening messages, as she would actually send it (one or two sentences)

Why saying it in week eight is easier than saying it in month eight

The same sentence means something different depending on how long the pattern has been running. Say what changes.

6. Rebuild the week (lesson 1.3)

Using the weekly planning grid, sketch what Sofia's week should look like. Book the fixed points, name two protected blocks for her deadline work, set a pattern for checking messages, and leave some time unplanned.

What did you have to remove to make it fit, and who has to be told?

7. The probation review

Rui's review called Sofia "extremely responsive" and said she "never lets anything sit". Both are meant as praise.

What is that review actually measuring, and what would a better one measure instead?

Responsiveness is easy to see from a distance; the work that matters often is not. What does a manager who cannot see you end up rewarding?

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Compare with a second country

When you have finished, open the version for one other partner country: Portugal, Germany, Estonia. Then answer, in your own notes:

4. Two things that would be different for Sofia in that country.
5. One thing that is the same in both. Hint: the EU Working Time Directive sets a minimum daily rest of 11 consecutive hours in every member state.
6. Who she would ask in each country.

Before you finish

- ☐ The vague words in the advert are named, with what should have been written down
- ☐ Three experiences are matched to HR tasks, each with evidence
- ☐ At least three distinct problems are named, each with an owner, and one first change is chosen with a reason
- ☐ Three data findings, each with what she does instead using what she actually has
- ☐ The sentence to Rui is written as she would send it
- ☐ The rebuilt week names what was removed and who is told
- ☐ You have answered what the probation review was really measuring
- ☐ You compared with one other country and said which part is the same everywhere

Sources

- Ley 10/2021, de 9 de julio, de trabajo a distancia (BOE, consolidated text)
- EU-OSHA, Directive 2003/88/EC on working time

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