

COVID-19 PANDEMIC RELIEF MEASURES

In view of the extraordinary conditions that Greek society and economy are facing due to the new coronavirus, which has led to the lockdown of a lot of businesses in order to stop its spread, Greek government has adopted some emergency extraordinary measures aiming primarily to the support of businesses and employees, who are affected by this pandemic.

Five Legislative Acts (on 25.02.2020, on 11.03.2020, on 14.03.2020, on 20.03.2020 and on 30.03.2020), based on which also numerous Ministerial Decisions have been issued so far implementing temporary measures against the coronavirus pandemic and to sustain the Greek economy.

Measures mainly regard businesses that are suspended by virtue of a governmental order, or those who, even not suspended by order, are significantly affected, as well as their employees. Business sectors significantly affected are determined by the Ministry of Finance according to the specific Code of Professional Activities (CPA) that each business use. A list of the CPAs is included in ministerial acts and is also published on the [website](#) of the Ministry of Finance, as it is updated regularly.

- 1. Special aid measures** to support suspended or significantly affected businesses and their employees:
 - i) Option for significantly affected businesses **to suspend some or all employment contracts** for 45 days maximum starting on 21.03.2020. Businesses must postpone the term of the contracts for as long as they suspended them.
 - ii) Termination of employment contracts for suspended businesses and business who have suspended employment contracts is prohibited. Any termination after 18.03.2020 is invalid, while **maintenance of employment relationships** is a prerequisite for businesses to benefit from the supportive measures.
 - iii) **Operation of businesses with security personnel:** Each employee can be employed for a minimum of two (2) weeks each month, either continuously or intermittently, while at least 50% of the employees of a business must work as security personnel on a weekly rotation.
 - iv) Option for suspended or significantly affected businesses **to move employees between entities of the same business group.**
 - v) **Special purpose compensation of 800 Euros** (unseizable and tax-free) for 45 days and until 30.04, as an extraordinary financial support for the employees of suspended businesses whose employment contracts have temporarily been suspended. Former employees, whose employment contracts were terminated between 01.03.2020 and 20.03.2020 are also eligible for this special purpose compensation. Their insurance contributions are also fully covered by the State. However, the compensation will not be given to employees working remotely, being on legal leave, to security personnel and to employees whose employment contract is not suspended.

Employers must submit a relevant statement in ERGANI Digital Information System, while employees must also submit a statement in the online platform of the Ministry of Labour.

vi) Businesses suspended or significantly affected can **postpone the payment of Easter Bonuses of their employees** until 30.06.2020. In case the employment relationship is suspended, the amount of the Easter Bonus corresponding to the suspended time period is covered by the State budget.

vii) **Social security contributions** payable for February and March are suspended for three months, for the employees of suspended or significantly affected businesses, and for self-employed persons affected. On the same time, they have the option to pay contributions on time with **25% reduction**.

viii) **Tax payments** due in March and April are suspended until 31.08.2020 for suspended or significantly affected businesses, their employees and for self-employed persons affected. Suspended payments include, payment of due VAT, payment of any kind of debts to Tax Authorities and Audit Centres and payment of instalments of debts in settlement. On the same time, businesses and physical persons can opt to pay taxes on time with **25% reduction**.

ix) **Decrease by 40% of the rent** payable for the months of March and April for businesses suspended in virtue of governmental act, as well as for their employees whose employment contracts have been suspended (for their main residence).

x) **For the unemployed:** Extension of unemployment aid for two more months and until 31.05.2020.

xi) **Suspension of payment of loan instalments to Credit Institutions** for suspended or significantly affected businesses, self-employed persons and their employees until 30.09.2020.

xii) **Payment dates of all securities** due from 30.03.2020 until 31.05.2020 are extended for 75 days. This applies to suspended or significantly affected businesses. In order to be extended, securities must be sent to the banks by the ones having rights on them within three (3) days from 30.3.2020 through a special electronic platform.

xiii) Businesses significantly affected will be eligible to receive **funding by the State** through an 'advance payment' system. Sums to be received will be repaid to the Greek State within the next years together at a low interest. Details on this measure are still to be announced.

2. A **"special purpose leave"** for employees – parents of children up to the age of fifteen (regardless of age for children attending schools for special needs), who must take care of their children during the time schools remain closed. It is offered only if both parents are employees and only to one of the two. Sharing of the special purpose leave between the parents also available. In any case, the employee must have at least six days of ordinary leave remaining.

Should be taken from 11.03.2020 until 10.04.2020 and is always for at least four (4) days, from which three (3) days are considered special leave (1/3 of their cost is paid by the State and the remaining 2/3 are paid by the employer) and one (1) day is considered an ordinary leave and is fully paid by the employer.

3. Special emergency legislature provides also for measures for the continuity and adjustment of corporations to new extraordinary conditions, such as:
- i) **General meetings and Board of Directors' meetings of any kind of company or partnership** can be conducted via teleconference for some or all its parties pursuant to special provisions due to gathering restrictions, even if such option was not provisioned in the articles of association. General meeting invitation shall include all necessary information for participation. Signatures of BoD members can be replaced by emails or other electronic means.
 - ii) **Beneficial Owner Register** operation and relevant deadlines are suspended for three (3) months starting from 30.03.2020.
 - iii) **Publication of annual financial statements** for the financial year 2019 of issuers listed in the Athens Stock Exchange is suspended until 30.06.2020.

For any further information or advice in respect to the above measures or any other relative subject, please contact any associate of our firm or send your queries to info@souriadakistsibris.gr.

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