

Health and Safety at the workplace: Employer's rights and obligations in Greece in the light of the **Covid-19 viral challenge**

March 2020

The protection of workers' health and safety is a fundamental obligation of the employer, extending not only to the prevention of work accidents and occupational diseases, but also to the achievement of a healthy work environment. **The infection of an employee by the coronavirus at the workplace may be deemed as an occupational disease, imposing additional obligations of the employer.**

Under the current circumstances resulting from the outbreak of the coronavirus, in the light of existing Greek legislation and relevant extraordinary temporary measures of the Greek government, such obligations of an employer who can still manage to operate his business, are summarized in the bulletin of the Greek Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs nr. 12339/404/12.03.2020. The Labour Inspectorate of same Ministry has provided further Guidelines.

Briefly:

Flexibility in formalities

Given the extreme circumstances of constant amendments of work arrangements and people having to remain at home, the obligation of the employers to submit in advance certain information to the ERGANI Digital Information System are suspended as from March 11, 2020 until April 10, 2020. More specifically, employers may submit aggregated information on staff's working hours schedule and legal overtime working within the first 10 days of the following month.

Remote work

Employers are entitled to unilaterally introduce **remote work** (*working from home*).



Special Purpose parental leave

During the period as from March 11, 2020 until April 10, 2020 a new special purpose paid leave may be temporarily granted to employed parents of children attending school up to the grade of junior high or children with disabilities. Such special leave is of a minimum duration of 4 days out of which: 3 days constitute the special purpose leave and 1 day is deducted from the employee's annual leave. The cost of the special purpose leave burdens the employer by 2/3 and the Greek State by 1/3.

Preventive measures - Recommendations for the protection of employees' health and safety

The employer shall:

- facilitate the removal from the workplace, either by imposing remote working or by means of a paid leave:
 - a. of any employee having symptoms of the coronavirus, either himself or a family member;
 - b. of any employee belonging to vulnerable groups, including pregnant women.
- Update of the Professional Risk Assessment in relation to the risk assessment and the measures for prevention and protection against coronavirus.

- Inform employees about the risk of coronavirus infection and of the preventive and protective measures against it, in accordance with the guidelines of Hellenic National Public Health Organization.
- Consult with employees and encourage the submission of relevant proposals.
- Keep workplaces clean and hygienic, by taking environmental and personal hygiene measures, in accordance with the guidelines of Hellenic National Public Health Organization (e.g. provide employees with antiseptic solutions, put sanitizing hand rub dispensers in prominent places around the workplace and make sure these dispensers are regularly refilled, regular cleaning and disinfection of work areas, surfaces (e.g. desks and tables) and objects (e.g. telephones, keyboards), regular ventilation of workplaces, maintenance of ventilation - air conditioning systems etc.).
- Provide the employees with appropriate personal protective equipment, provide relevant education and supervise its proper use.



- Arrange work in a way to avoid overcrowding in the workplace (e.g. arriving and leaving the workplace at intervals, adoption of remote working where possible, replacement of live collaborations by tele-communication, e-mail, video-conferencing etc. if possible, special rearrangements, avoidance of unnecessary traveling).
- Inform the employees that they ought to inform immediately the employer and the occupational doctor, if any, for the appearance of any symptoms.

***Your Legal Partners** have applied all the above measures and are actively advising clients in relation to the Covid-19 outbreak. Please do not hesitate to [get in touch with us](#) if your business has been affected*

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