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## **COVID-19 measures in Greece**

Greece has managed to successfully flatten the curve of the coronavirus pandemic within its borders so far; with nearly 2626 confirmed cases and 144 people in the country deceased of COVID-19 until the 4th of May 2020, statistics are on the lower side compared with EU countries with similarly sized populations.

The key to Greece's lower numbers was the swift response and the proactive measures taken to contain the virus, which were the strictest in Europe at the time. With the first reported case on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February, the following measures were gradually applied:

- Social distancing measures, isolation of patients and their contacts, self-isolation of all travellers; severe restrictions on flights and boats trips.
- Restrictions on all non-essential movement throughout the country; movement outside the house was permitted only for specific reasons and could be requested by signing an attestation form or by sending a free SMS. In case of authorities' check, the identity card and the SMS reply (or the signed attestation form) should be presented.
- Operations of schools, universities, churches, hotels, cafés, bars, restaurants, shops, tourist spots, concerts, carnivals, and similar or non-essential retail activity were suspended.
- Essential services (supermarkets, pharmacies and public services) remained open for the public following social distancing protocols; public services worked only with appointments or online.
- Businesses were asked to institute remote work protocols and schools & educational institutions launched distance learning.

The government also announced a series of measures of more than 6.8 billion euro to support the economy, businesses and employees. The measures include, but are not limited to the following:

- A € 800-benefit for 45 days and payment of the social security contribution for employees that their work is temporarily suspended, while prohibiting employee's dismissal.
- A € 800-benefit for 45 days for freelancers, self-employed and individual business owners (who employ 0-5 employees).
- Financial aid of € 600 for self-employed individuals of specific professions (scientists, lawyers, accountants, researchers, etc.).

- Extension of regular unemployment benefit, and financial assistance of € 400 to long-term unemployed individuals that do not receive any other benefit from the state.
- Extension of deadlines for the payment of tax liabilities, VAT liabilities and tax instalments for individuals and businesses until the 30<sup>th</sup> of September.
- Extension or suspension of the deadline for the payment of social security contributions until the 30<sup>th</sup> of September.
- Provision of a 25% reduction on certified tax liabilities & social security contributions, in case the remaining 75% is paid in due time and the above extensions are not used.
- Special purpose paid leave for parents working in the private or public sector and their children are enrolled in educational units whose operation has been suspended.
- 40% rent deduction to employees and companies that their work is temporarily suspended.
- Possibility for employers to pay the Easter bonus instead of April 2020 at a later time (up to two months later).
- Suspension in debt payments to all companies with (performing) bank loans that will not dismiss any employees until the end of the year; the interest payments are made by the government for three months (April-June) and suspension of debt payments for everyone that receives the 800-euro benefit.

As of the 4th of May, Greece is easing the lockdown restrictions and announced a plan for re-opening most of its businesses until mid June (subject to change at any time). Social distancing and the use of mask and gloves will remain in place until further notice, but retail shops, businesses and services are resuming gradually their operations ([https://covid19.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Greece-Plan-for-the-gradual-easing-of-COVID-19-restrictive-measures-Introductory-Presentation-28.04.20\\_EN.pdf](https://covid19.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Greece-Plan-for-the-gradual-easing-of-COVID-19-restrictive-measures-Introductory-Presentation-28.04.20_EN.pdf)).

IAS SA & HBP SA, following the latest developments and the government's measures regarding COVID-19, have implemented a range of actions, including remote working. A small group of people remains in our office to ensure that all operations run smoothly and to coordinate all actions. Our top priority remains to ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of our colleagues, clients, guests, suppliers and contractors by minimizing the presence at the office and clients' premises whilst ensuring that we continue to deliver high quality services.