

Stricter containment measures for the Attica region – extension of “Synergasia” mechanism and other provisions

By virtue of recent legislation, the Greek Government imposed stricter containment measures for the Attica region, including the obligation to place at least 40% of the personnel on remote work, and introduced new measures to support employment.

A. Containment measures for the Attica region

The new measures for Attica, which apply until **04 October 2020**, in an attempt to contain the virus outbreak are the following:

All indoor employees must wear a face mask, unless they work in single-occupancy offices.

Employers are obliged to apply a system of remote work to at least 40% of their employees whose duties may (depending on their nature) be provided remotely. Employers must notify in advance and in any case **within 24 hours from the publication of the law in the Government Gazette (which is expected today or tomorrow)** the application of remote work to ERGANI. Failure to do so is subject to a fine of Euro 3,000.

Furthermore, the working hours of private sector employees must be adjusted so that employees arrive to and depart from work in half hour intervals and in any case within 2 hours from their contractual arrival and departure time. For the duration of the measure, the obligation of employers to notify changes in working hours to ERGANI is temporarily suspended. Employers continue, however, to be obliged to notify overtime/overwork in advance.

B. Extension of “Syn-Ergasia” mechanism

The “Syn-Ergasia” mechanism, pursuant to which eligible employers may reduce up to 50% the working hours of employees, with the State covering part of salary losses, will remain in force until 31 December 2020.

C. Suspension of employment contracts in specific market sectors

Employers in the sectors of tourism, air and sea transport, land passenger transport, food, culture and sport may either suspend for the first time, or extend the suspension of, employment contracts for a maximum of 30 days and in any event not beyond 31 October 2020. During the suspension

period, employees are entitled to a (pro rated) state benefit of Euro 534 and full social security coverage, borne by the State.

Employers who make use of the above measure are prohibited from making any dismissals until 31 October 2020 and must maintain the same number of employees under the same type of employment contracts for 30 days following the expiry of the suspension.

Further details on the implementation of the above will be provided by ministerial decision.

D. Special leave entitlement for employees with Covid-19 infected children

A special leave is introduced for employees whose children have been diagnosed with Covid-19. Said employees are entitled to a paid leave of 14 days or longer if deemed necessary by medical opinion or if the child is hospitalised for treatment. The Greek State will subsidise part (1/3) of the employees' remuneration during the leave.

Such special leave is granted in addition to any other special parental leave or any other measures aiming at the prevention and containment of the virus at the workplace.

Further details on the implementation of the above will be provided by ministerial decision.

E. Special provisions for employees in quarantine

Employees placed in quarantine for a period of 7 or 14 days, in accordance with the recommendations of the National Public Health Organisation, may be obliged during the quarantine to provide remote work.

In case remote work is not possible, after their return to the office the employees may be required to work for one extra hour per day and up to a maximum of half the working hours of the quarantine. Said extra work is not regarded as overtime or overwork and the employees are not entitled to any surcharge or compensation.

For the duration of the quarantine employers must pay in full the employees' salary and corresponding social security contributions.

The above provisions have retroactive effect as of 01 September 2020.

F. Christmas allowance

Employers on lockdown by order of the authorities or belonging to specific impacted categories, as defined by the Ministry of Finance, are required to pay the Christmas allowance upon its due date, i.e. by 21 December 2020.

Employees, whose contracts have been suspended, will receive from their employer a portion of the Christmas allowance excluding the period of suspension. The remaining portion corresponding to the suspension period will be paid by the State and will be calculated on the basis of the special state benefit received by the employees during the suspension.

G. Extension of telework

The employers' right to unilaterally impose a system of remote work, which had been introduced by previous legislation, is now further extended until **31 December 2020**.

H. Vulnerable groups of employees

Employees belonging to vulnerable groups, as defined in Ministerial Decision 37095/1436 and evidenced by an appropriate medical certificate, are entitled, upon their request, to provide remote work. The employer is obliged to accept such request on condition that work can be provided remotely.

If work cannot be provided remotely, the employer is required to take all measures necessary to ensure that employees belonging to vulnerable groups do not provide work that requires them to come in contact with the public.

Finally, in case such measures cannot be taken, the employer is entitled - as a means of last resort for the protection of said employees - to suspend their employment contracts for a period until 30 September 2020.

Failure of the employer to comply with the above requirements, including not respecting the order of available measures, is subject to a fine of Euro 5,000.

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