



**EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF SOCIAL RIGHTS
COMITÉ EUROPÉEN DES DROITS SOCIAUX**

10 September 2020

Case Document No. 2

Greek Bar Associations v. Greece
Complaint No. 196/2020

OBSERVATIONS BY THE GOVERNMENT ON ADMISSIBILITY

Registered at the Secretariat on 14 August 2020



HELLENIC REPUBLIC

**Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Directorate of International Relations
Department of Relations with
International Organizations**

**Observations of the Greek Government
on the admissibility of *Collective Complaint 196/2020***

Greek Bar Associations v. Greece

Further to your letter of 15 June 2020, by which you invited the Greek Government to make written submissions on the admissibility of collective complaint *196/2020 – Greek Bar Associations v. Greece*, we have the honor to submit for your consideration the following observations:

As to the legal status of the complainant organisations

In view of the adoption of the Decision on the admissibility of the collective complaint under discussion, the following parameters concerning the legal status of the complainant organisations as trade unions, should be taken into account, in accordance with article 1(c) of the Additional Protocol to the European Social Charter (The Protocol) that provides for a system of collective complaints.

Article 1 (c) of the Protocol provides for the following: “*Contracting Parties to this Protocol recognize the right of the following organisations to submit complaints alleging unsatisfactory application of the Charter:*

(a) international organisations of employers and trade unions referred to in paragraph 2 of Article 27 of the Charter;

(b) other international non-governmental organisations which have consultative status with the Council of Europe and have been put on a list established for this purpose by the Governmental Committee;

(c) representative national organisations of employers and trade unions within the jurisdiction of the Contracting Party against which they have lodged a complaint. The said article provides the

possibility for national representative workers' and employers' organisations that fall under the jurisdiction of the party complained against, to submit collective complaints".

The collective complaint under discussion is signed by 54 Greek Bar Associations. As also stated in the Complaint (para2), Bar Associations in Greece are instituted by Law and they form "Legal Entities of Public Law"¹. They do not constitute trade unions.

As a consequence of their legal status per se, Bar Associations lack basic trade union prerogatives such as trade union freedom and the right to strike. Under national law², key characteristics of a trade union organisation are the following: free participation, free formation under private law, trade union form, pursuit of trade union goals, independence from the employer - from political parties and from the state, democratic organisation and democratic operation. Organisations established by law as Legal Entities of Public Law, such as Bar Associations, are not trade unions.

Furthermore, participation of lawyers in these associations is mandatory to acquire admission to practice law in Greece³, hence the said associations are in fact broadly representative. In addition, lawyers themselves are also subject to a kind of state supervision namely with regard to their appointment, career advancement and termination of employment⁴. Unlike trade unions for which a basic prerequisite to join is the dependent working relationship, wherefrom the right to strike subsequently emanates, Bar Associations, whose members are lawyers, do not fall under the trade union category of associations.

The same conclusion is also drawn by examining the fundamental Standards of the International Labour Organisation (ILO Conventions 87 and 98)⁵ ratified by Greece, while our national law, Law 1264/1982 on "*The democratization of the trade union movement and the protection of workers' trade union freedoms*", in line with the provisions of the above instruments, guarantees workers' trade union rights and regulates the establishment, organisation, operation and action of their trade union organisations. For the application of this law, workers are considered all persons employed bound by a dependent working relationship under private law (salaried workers), including those who work in the public sector, in Public Bodies Corporate or Local Self-Government Agencies. In accordance with article 4, para1 of the said law "The purpose of every trade union organisation shall be to preserve and promote the labour, economic, social insurance, social and trade union interests of the workers".

In light of the above, the complainant organisations do not meet the requirements specified in art.1 (c) of being a national trade union and, as a consequence, do not have *locus standi* before the ECSR under the Additional Protocol providing for a system of Collective Complaints.

¹ Art.89 "Administrative and Financial Independence" of Law 4194/2013 [O.G 208 A' /27-9-2013], Code of Lawyers

² Law 1264/1982 on "*The democratization of the trade union movement and the protection of workers' trade union freedoms*"

³ Art.87 of Law 4194/2013 [O.G 208 A' /27-9-2013], Code of Lawyers

⁴ Arts.23-28 of Law 4194/2013 [O.G 208 A' /27-9-2013], Code of Lawyers

⁵ See International Labour Convention (ILC) 87 «Freedom of Association and the Right to Organize» and ILC 98 «Right to organize and collective bargaining» ratified by L.D. 4204/1961 (O.G. A' 174) and L.D. 4205/1961 (O.G. A' 174) respectively.

As to the adoption of immediate measures

The unprecedented state of emergency experienced by the entire humanity due to the coronavirus pandemic has led all countries to unprecedented restriction measures for the free movement and social assembly in order to limit the spread of the virus and prevent hospital overcrowding and consequently a health crisis.

In this very negative and unprecedented situation, given the fact that the WHO declared this new virus a pandemic level, the Hellenic Government, as well as most governments around the world, was called upon to deal with the situation by taking preventive measures well in advance - admittedly- to protect public health and safety of the general population from the new Sars CoV-II coronavirus and COVID-19 disease.

The very prompt response of the Hellenic Government and the timely taken difficult decision to put the country in quarantine early, in order to prevent the uncontrolled spread of the virus, led to that phase (until the end of the spring) to achieve good results as regards confirmed cases and victims and hospitalizations, as well, at the Intensive Care Units. A team of doctors and infectious disease specialists assisted the Government's work. The measures taken during the evolution of the country's epidemiological situation were based on their recommendations.

In this unprecedented negative global situation, where fear, panic and ignorance prevailed, urgent and exceptional measures were taken by our country, but also by most European countries, for reasons of prevention and protection against the new coronavirus. A brief reference of those measures is made below. In addition to the restrictive measures adopted at an early stage, the Hellenic Government also adopted relief measures to alleviate from the repercussions occurred.

Emergency prevention and protection measures against the new coronavirus COVID-19⁶:

(by way of illustration)

- Temporary ban on travel outside Greek territory
- Temporary ban on the operation of schools and all kinds of educational structures, institutions and bodies, public and private ones, of any type and degree, places of religious worship, as well as a temporary ban and suspension of travel- for any reason- of teachers and other staff, of pupils and students of any of the above school units, educational structures and institutions.
- Temporary ban on the operation of theaters, cinemas, sports and artistic events areas, archeological sites and museums, health-regulated establishments, private enterprises, public services and organizations, as well as public gathering places in general.
- Temporary imposition of restriction measures for public transport within the territory.
- Temporary stay-at-home restriction to avoid actions that could cause the spread of the disease.

⁶ The relevant Acts of Legislative Content (PNP), the most important of which are PNP 25/2/2020, PNP 11/3/2020, PNP 14/3/2020, PNP 20/3/2020, PNP 30/3/2020 provide initially for the possibility of adopting such measures. The adoption of Joint Ministerial Decisions followed in order to specialize and implement the envisaged measures.

Measures implemented in the field of work:

- Work in rotation/ turn-based work
- Distance working/ tele-working
- Security personnel at work
- Special leaves (special purpose leave for children care, special sick leave)
- Public entry restriction at services, observance of preventive measures according to the instructions of the National Organization of Public Health (EODY), restriction or suspension of official travels abroad, use of means such as teleconference where possible (ex. during the operation of collective bodies)
- Measures for vulnerable groups facilitation
- Recruitment of temporary staff to deal with the new coronavirus COVID-19, restriction of public service in person, suspension-redefinition of deadlines for submitting a request or administrative appeal to the administration.
- Ability to use reduced working hours for parents as a one-off and temporary measure⁷.
- Establishment of a special support mechanism for workers under a dependent labour relationship at enterprises-employers, the operation of which has been temporarily banned due to emergency measures for Covid-19 coronavirus, including measures of financial support, special purpose compensation, insurance coverage, special allowances and training checks⁸.
- Suspension of employment contracts⁹
- Prohibition of termination of employment contracts¹⁰.
- Special purpose compensation¹¹
- Extension of the deadline for the payment of insurance contributions as well as of the deadlines for the payment of installments, arrangements or facilitations for the payment of insurance contributions –on installments terms- by enterprises for the employees.

Measures for the lawyers' sector as well:

Due emphasis should be placed, -since it is also a key point of the complaint-, to the fact that **the lawyers' sector**, which falls within a general category of legal activities, as well as **legal**

⁷ Law 4690/2020 (GG 104 A')

⁸ Article 13 PNP 14/3/2020

⁹ Article 11 para.2 A (a) and (c) PNP-20/3/2020 provides for the possibility of suspending the employment contracts for a part or all of their staff, by private sector enterprises-employers, which are significantly affected by the negative effects of the Coronavirus-COVID 19 phenomenon, in order to adapt their operational needs to the adverse environment created. The private sector enterprises-employers that make use of the above regulation are obliged after the expiration of the suspension period of their personnel's employment contracts, to keep the same number of job posts for a period equal to that of the suspension.

¹⁰ Article 11, para1 PNP-20/3/2020: Employers-enterprises suspended from their business activity by order of a public authority, and for as long as the measures against the coronavirus COVID-19 last, should not make staff reduction by terminating employment contracts. In such case, these terminations of contracts are deemed invalid.

¹¹ Article 11, para.2 B (a) PNP- 20/3/2020- Workers whose employment contract is suspended, either due to a ban on the operation of the enterprise by order of a public authority, or due to the implementation of the measure of subpara 2A (a), are entitled to an one-off financial assistance, as a special purpose compensation.

activities in general [which include, inter alia, legal advice and legal representation services in ordinary court judicial proceedings concerning labour law, commercial law, civil law, criminal law, notary services, trainee lawyer's services, bailiff's services, auction services etc.], as well as **other sectors of scientists-freelancers**, -falling within the [country's] six key scientific sectors of the country (economists, accountants, engineers, architects, professors, teachers, researchers, etc.)-, **received a financial support-special purpose compensation of six hundred (600) Euros¹²**.

In this regard, the following are clarified:

The NSRF (National Strategic Reference Framework) Executive Unit of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs published the No. 286/2.4.2020¹³ Call for expressions of interest for participation in the action: "Special distance learning program (*tele-training*) with certification for scientists affected by COVID-19, included in the country's six key scientific sectors, based on the Business Activity Codes (KAD) designated by the Ministry of Finance" in DIAVGEIA¹⁴ and on the website of the NSRF Executive Unit (<http://www.epiteliki-ergasias.gov.gr>) as well as further instructions to providers and beneficiaries. A separate application (<https://elearning.yeka.gr>) was created at the ERGANI information system (Ministry of Labour database), which the interested distance-training providers and beneficiaries entered via their personal Taxisnet¹⁵ codes, in order to apply and manage their application form. The submission of applications started 3/4/2020. On 24/4/2020, this call for expressions of interest was cancelled in view of the content re-evaluation of the provided distance-learning program. On 29/4/2020 the No. 16604/3224/29-04-20 Joint Ministerial Decision was issued (GG B' 1629/29-4-20), on the basis of which, lawyers, within the branch of legal activities, as well as other sectors of scientists-freelancers who had applied on the basis of the above invitation (reference number 286/2.4.2020) were beneficiaries of the financial assistance-special purpose compensation¹⁶.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has been designated as the competent body for this financial assistance payment process. The above payment was made in a lump sum by crediting the beneficiary's bank account whereas such financial assistance is tax-free, inalienable and exempt from garnishment by the State or third parties, by way of derogation from each general and specific provision, is not subject to any withholding, fee or contribution, not bound and offset with established debts to the tax administration and the State in general, the Municipalities, the Regions, the social fund authorities or the credit institutions and they are not assessed on the basis of income thresholds for the payment of any social or welfare benefits.

As it is clarified on the website of the Executive Unit, **all lawyers registered in the country's Bar Associations are beneficiaries of the distance learning program based on the No. 2/2020 Invitation. The same applies to trainee lawyers.**

Indicatively, the instructions for beneficiaries, posted on the Executive Unit's website, state the following:

¹² See Joint Ministerial Decision No.16604/3224/29-04-20 [ΦΕΚ Β' 1629/29-4-20]

¹³ No. 2/2020 (ΑΔΑ): ΨΣ2246ΜΤΑΚ-ΞΙΩ

¹⁴ "Transparency Portal" where all governmental acts and decisions -digitally signed and assigned a unique Internet Uploading Number (IUN)- are mandatorily uploaded.

¹⁵ On-line tax registration system.

¹⁶ According to the said Joint Ministerial Decision, beneficiaries of the above financial assistance-special purpose compensation are all those who applied to participate in the Invitation No.286/2-4-2020 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, without having to take any other action. Those beneficiaries of the financial assistance-special purpose compensation, who had not taken part in the above invitation, could until 08.05.2020 submit an electronic application on IT ERGANI (supportemployees.services.gov.gr) for the payment of the above financial assistance, using their taxisnet codes.

*“The invitation is addressed to scientists-freelance professionals whose main professional employment Business Activity Code (KAD) is included in the KADs of the Annex X of the Invitation. It is pointed out that they can apply to this Invitation if they are not eligible for the 800€ allowance. If a scientist who falls within the KADs of Annex X of the Invitation: has a dependent employment relationship and his/ her employer has closed down on the basis of KAD following a Public Authority order or he/she is included among the affected KADs and the employer has suspended his employment contract and then this scientist follows the procedure based on the relevant Joint Ministerial Decisions and Ministerial Decisions, the latter is eligible for the 800€ allowance and other financial support measures. **In case a scientist who falls within the KADs of annex X of the Invitation is a freelancer, he/ she is not entitled to 800€ and, on the contrary, he/ she is entitled to 600€**¹⁷.*

In addition, according to No. 16604/3224/ 27.4.2020 Joint Ministerial Decision on “Financial Assistance-Special Purpose Compensation”, “Those beneficiaries of the special purpose financial assistance who did not take part in the above invitation, may submit an electronic application to ERGANI (supportemployees.services.gov.gr) until 08.05.2020 for the payment of the above special purpose financial compensation, using their Taxisnet codes”.

The reason that some of the beneficiaries, who had applied to the above Invitation, have not received to date the financial assistance of 600€ is:

- either because he/ she was on an employment contract suspension, he/ she was entitled to 800€ and was therefore not eligible for the said Invitation (above Instruction)
- either because he/she has declared an incorrect IBAN during the submission of his/ her application resulting in the non-completion of the payment.

For this case, after the payments clearance by the financial services, beneficiaries will be informed by email to the email address they have indicated at their application form for the data correction process in order to make the payment of 600€.

In addition, the following basic relief measures also apply to the lawyers’ sector:

- VAT payment and collection of established debts suspension and deadline extension for payment of installments to the Tax Administration under specific terms and conditions¹⁸.
- Reduction to 6% of the VAT rate for items of personal hygiene and protection, acceleration of income tax and VAT refund procedures, provided that the total amount is up to thirty thousand (30.000) Euros per tax and beneficiary. Extension of debt collection suspension for employees and natural persons leasing real estate to financially affected businesses under specific terms and conditions, reduction of rent for professional and main residence¹⁹ leases.
- 25% discount for the timely paid established debts’ installments of businesses and natural persons to the Tax Administration (Article one), under specific terms and conditions.

¹⁷ As the complainant organizations acknowledge, see para.57 of the Collective Complaint

¹⁸ Act of Legislative Content of 11/3/2020 (GG A’ 55/11-3-2020) “Urgency measures in response to the negative impact of the coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak and the need for preventing further spread” approved by Article 2 of Law 4682/2020 (GG A’ 76)

¹⁹ Act of Legislative Content of 20/3/2020 (GG A’ 68/ 20-3-2020) “Urgency measures in response to the implications from the risk of spread of the coronavirus COVID-19, providing support to the society and entrepreneurship and ensuring the smooth operation of the market and public administration” Approved by Article 1 of law 4683/2020 (GG A’ 83)

Extension or suspension of the Tax Procedures Code deadlines (Law 4174/2013), such as the deadlines for the lodging of an appeal and the notification of temporary tax or fine correction acts and final tax or fine correction acts, state assistance in the form of a “repayable advance” to the financially affected businesses²⁰.

- Extension of the 25% discount benefit to timely paid installments of established debts for May 2020, extension of the rent reduction of professional leases, main residence leases, dependent members-students and seamen’s leases, deadline extension for retroactively received earnings²¹.
- Possibility of payment of (a) the income tax for natural and legal persons in eight (8) equal monthly installments for the tax year 2019 (b) of the Unified Property Ownership Tax (ENFIA) in six (6) equal monthly installments²².

Measures taken by the Government in the field of Justice for the safety and facilitation of those involved (citizens-lawyers-notaries-magistrates):

- Measures to facilitate Electronic Issuance and Receipt of Certificates:

In the context of immediate action taken due to the spread of the coronavirus COVID-19, *the electronic issuance and receipt of certificates by the Judicial Authorities services was foreseen, without the citizens’ physical presence*²³. In the first phase, the digital issuance of certificates of inheritance by the country’s courts was envisaged. These certificates cover the largest number of applications and therefore concern a large number of citizens. The possibility of a remote service was thus provided, as well as the submission of application forms and the receipt of issued certificates without a “megarosimo” stamp²⁴.

- Imposition of the temporary suspension of operation measure for all Courts and Public Prosecutor’s Offices throughout the country and the National School of Judicial Officers

The imposition of the temporary suspension of operation measure for all Courts and Public Prosecutor’s Offices throughout the country and the National School of Judicial Officers was valid for the entire period from 13/3/2020 to 31/5/2020²⁵.

The following cases were excluded from temporary suspension:

- a) Publication of decisions

²⁰ Act of Legislative Content of 30/3/2020 (GG A’ 75/30-3-2020) “Measures in response to the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic and other urgent provisions, approved by Article 1 of Law 4684/2020 (A’ 86).

²¹ Law 4690/2020 (GG A’ 104/ 30-5-2020)

²² Law 4706/2020 (GG A’ 136/ 17-07-2020)

²³ See JMD 8721/14-4-2020 [GG 1384 B’/14-4-2020] “Suspension of provisions implementation for the mandatory contribution to the “megarosimo” stamp for certificates issued by Judicial Authorities’ Services, co-signed by the Ministers of Finance-Justice-State.

²⁴ Stamp for the special fund for construction of Courts and Prisons.

²⁵ These are the Joint Ministerial Decisions Δ1α/ΓΠ.οικ. 17734/2020 [GG 833/B/12-3-2020], Δ1α/ΓΠ.οικ. 24403/2020 [GG 1301 B’/11-04/2020] and Δ1α/ΓΠ.οικ. 30340/2020 [GG 1857 B’/15-5-2020]. The two first JMDs were co-signed by the Ministers of National Defense-Health-Justice, the latter by the Ministers of Development and Investments-Citizen Protection-National Defense-Labour and Social Affairs-Health, Justice-Interior.

- b) Issuance of temporary restraining orders and application for interim measures, already identified for discussion within the period of courts' suspension of operation
- c) Litigation of misdemeanors in flagrante delicto
- d) Jury draw and beginning of the session of Mixed Jury Courts and Mixed Jury Courts of Appeals, as well as the draw of the compositions for the trial of criminal cases and interim measures cases in all courts of the country where such a draw is provided.
- e) Litigation of crimes for the temporarily detained accused, whose maximum detention period is supplemented on a case-by-case basis
- f) The criminal proceedings concerning misdemeanors, the limitation period of which is completed within the period from the beginning of the suspension until 31.5.2020.
- g) The criminal proceedings concerning crimes, the limitation period of which is completed within the time period from the beginning of the suspension until 31.1.2021.

For criminal proceedings, which began before the suspension and were adjourned within the period of suspension, the court, at the designated hearing, decided on their trial or re-suspension on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the above exceptions.

The courts' operation was limited to the necessary actions for the handling of cases which, according to this decision, are tried before the courts, as well as those which, on a case-by-case basis and at the discretion of the administration body of each one of those, were urgent and required immediate resolution. The specific issues for the courts' operation were regulated by their administration bodies' decisions.

The provisions of this article have also been applied to the military courts and prosecutor's offices of the country.

- **As regards the "Operating scheme for the period from 28.4.2020 to 15.5.2020 for the stipendiary and gratis mortgage registries, the land registry offices of Rhodes, Kos-Leros, the land registry offices of Piraeus, Thessaloniki, as well as the land registry offices and branches of the "Hellenic Cadastre" Body, throughout the territory, the following²⁶ applied:**

All kinds of transactions were allowed, as well as the files' control according to a decision of the Head of the competent Mortgage Registry, Land Registry Office or Branch of the "Hellenic Cadastre", which is displayed on the wall at the entrance of the Service and posted on its website, if available. This decision defined all the necessary details for the service's operation, the control mechanism, in order to avoid overcrowding and congestion phenomena within the service, the observable procedure for its common areas' ventilation, as well as any other necessary measures for the safe operation under the Head's responsibility against the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic. In any case, health measures for the above services must be applied, according to the recommendation of the 33rd Meeting of the Committee for the Treatment of Public Health Emergencies by Infectious Diseases Factors²⁷ since 24.4.2020.

²⁶ It is the JMD no. Δ1α/ΓΠ.οικ.26805/2020 GG 1587/B/25-4-2020, which was co-signed by the Ministers of Development and Investment, Citizen Protection, Labour and Social Affairs, Health and Interior.

²⁷ The validity of this JMD was extended until 31/5/2020 with a newer one (no. Δ1α/Γ.Π.οικ. 30344/2020 GG 1848 B'/14-5-2020, co-signed by the Ministers of Development and Investment, Citizen Protection, Labour and Social Affairs, Health and Interior)

- **Extension of the judicial year:**

In order to deal with the consequences of the operation suspension of courts and prosecutor's offices throughout the country due to the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic, **it was decided to limit the duration of the judicial vacations, for the current judicial year, from 16/07/2020 up to 31/08/2020**²⁸. Vacations began normally on July 1 and ended on September 15. By this way, an effort is made to advance the work of Justice, to adjudicate pending cases and to gradually restore the conditions of normalcy in the handling of cases for all those involved.

- **Memorandum of Cooperation on: "Actions for Digitization and Simplification of Justice Proceedings"**²⁹

Within the framework of the National Program for Simplification of Procedures, actions for digital transformation and simplification of justice proceedings were planned and promoted. Particular emphasis was given on the digitization, simplification, modernization and acceleration of the justice operation with the aim of facilitating the work of judges, court clerks and lawyers and serving the citizen, modernizing information and other infrastructure, and simplifying all procedures, reducing administrative burden, saving time and cost.

In particular, with the above Memorandum, the General Secretariat of Justice and Human Rights undertook to ensure:

1. the continuous recording of the justice's organizational and operational needs (courts, members of the Judiciary, law-clerks), the legal functions (lawyers, notaries, bailiffs) and the Mortgage Registries and Land Registry Offices and the collection of relevant proposals to find solutions for digitization and simplification of procedures
2. cooperation and coordination of Judicial Branches for the actions' implementation
3. cooperation and participation of the Project Management Teams for the actions' implementation
4. feeding and updating the information provided on the existing procedures and the procedures that are being digitized and simplified
5. the productive operation of applications and IT systems that may arise within this context.

Lastly, as regards other allegations of the complainants, the Greek Government wishes to stress the following:

The allegation of the complaint that the legal profession is being targeted and discriminated against by the Greek Government, in a time when the latter is doing everything possible for public health protection, under unprecedented and emergency conditions, is utterly unacceptable and unfounded. The lawyers' status as public functionaries, which is recognized as

²⁸ See Article 18 of Law 4684/2020 (GG 86 A'/25-04-2020) for the ratification of the Act of Legislative Content 30-3-2020 (GG A' 75/30-3-2020) Measures in response to the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic and other urgent provisions".

²⁹ This Memorandum was signed between the General Secretariat of Justice and Human Rights of the Ministry of Justice and the General Secretariat for Digital Governance and Simplification of Procedures of the Ministry of Digital Governance, on 22-06-2020, within the framework of the National Program for Procedures Simplification (EPAD).

such by all public authorities' institutions, constitutes an integral part of the administration of justice in a democratic state such as the Hellenic democracy of the 21st century. The contribution of lawyers in justice and democracy generally in our country is admittedly recognized, their high participation in public affairs being an explicit indicator of this. In this light, under no circumstances shall the Greek Government accept such unsubstantiated allegations and arguments which give the impression that in our country any professional discipline, even more so the legal profession, is intentionally persecuted and targeted.

On the contrary, their role in human rights protection is recognized, as the role of other categories of workers – officials, who have been called upon under dire and unprecedented circumstances to offer their services under conditions of restriction and quarantine, such as the medical personnel, the nursing personnel, the civil protection personnel, the personnel in services whose operation has not been suspended and remained in their posts to serve public interest (for example the personnel of security forces, public transportation, pharmacists, journalists and relevant media professions, people employed in the food production, processing and retail sectors and the transport and tourism sector etc).

In this context, the lawyers' professional sector has been affected by the special circumstances brought about by the need to address the risk of the pandemic, as have other professional branches, which have been asked to stay at home, for their own safety and health and for safeguarding the supreme good of public health and human life, wherefrom they have undertaken, as much as possible, to assist the work of teachers, in case of professionals – employees with children, given that distance teaching had to be practiced, to the extent the circumstances, the facilities provided and the knowledge of ICTs allowed.

In any case, the measures taken were of an immediate and emergency nature in order to address an extreme situation and with the view to protecting public health. The Government, in an attempt to reduce the eventual negative impact of these measures, has adopted the alleviating measures already mentioned. With regard to the legal profession in particular, except for the measures of tax and financial content and those applied in the judicial sector, including, inter alia, the most prominent of which, i.e. facilitating Electronic Issuance and receipt of Certificates, actions of digitalization and simplification of judicial procedures and also the extension of the judicial year, a lump sum financial support of 600 euros was granted to freelancers – scientists, with the number of beneficiaries amounting to the initially announced number of the programme, that is 165.000 self-employed professionals, while lawyers under a dependent working relationship have been eligible for the special purpose compensation of 800 euros.

In light of all the above, the Greek Government deems the Complainants' request for the adoption of immediate measures manifestly unfounded considering that, in fact, the Greek Government, taking into account the budgetary margin currently available and with due consideration of the future evolution of the recession caused by the pandemic yet to be reflected in the labour market, has evidently taken immediate measures to tackle the challenges presented by the unprecedented health crisis of our time and will continue to do so with responsibility towards all the affected groups of the population in all sectors of the economy, while experiencing a second wave of the coronavirus pandemic in the country.