



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
MINISTRY OF CITIZEN PROTECTION

Athens, 18 June 2020



GENERAL SECRETARIAT
FOR CIVIL PROTECTION

Council of Europe
European Committee On Democracy And Governance (CDDG)
Thematic Meeting on a democratic governance response to COVID-19
18 June 2020
Videoconference
Opening address by

Mr Nikolaos Hardalias, Deputy Minister of Civil Protection and Crisis Management, Greece

Dear Secretary General, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank the Council of Europe for kindly inviting me to address this meeting and wish the Greek Chairmanship a very successful term.

I am very glad to be with all of you today, even under these extraordinary circumstances and I am confident that most fruitful conclusions are to be drawn by your contributions.

Let me start by saying something rather obvious, that the COVID-19 pandemic has proved to be one of the greatest and most unexpected challenges our world has faced in many years.

It forced us to take unprecedented decisions, as well as difficult measures vastly affecting our societies and in practice, all aspects of our way of life.

I am particularly pleased to say that in Greece, we managed to successfully contain the pandemic, having taken measures very early on. We specifically paid attention to targeted measures and their firm and timely application. This strategy greatly contributed to achieving positive results.

Moreover, by Prime Minister's decision, the general coordination of all relevant authorities responding to the pandemic has been assigned to the General Secretariat for Civil Protection. It has been a great honor and a great responsibility for the Civil Protection family.

Our primary goal was -and still is- to contain as effectively as possible the spread of coronavirus in order to ensure the highest possible level of protection of public health. This was our guide to whatever measures taken.

It is undeniable that many of the measures entailed partial restriction of human rights. The most striking example was of course the partial restriction imposed on the freedom of movement.

However, all measures taken fully complied with the provisions of our Constitutional chart and the national legislation.

Furthermore, we strictly adhered to the principles of necessity and proportionality, with regard to the aforementioned goal, namely the protection of public health. And all measures were implemented for the absolutely necessary period of time and have been gradually lifted by now.

And what is of the utmost importance, by no means was there any major impact on the enjoyment of fundamental human rights. There was no disruption of access to health and other vital services. On the contrary, all state actors ensured that everyone's needs would be fully respected and met, with particular attention paid to vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, the chronically ill, the migrants and refugees residing in Greece etc.

And I have to stress out that the vast majority of Greek citizens endorsed and abided by the measures, greatly contributing to the success of our strategy.

But, we also have to keep in mind that we are not over yet with COVID-19.

We hope that it will not be necessary to take such measures ever again, however we should remain alert. Protecting human lives remains our top priority and our unquestionable duty.

Thank you very much for your time.