

**BULGARIA COVID-19 TRACKER (last updated at 18:00 on 30 December 2022)**

Key legal measures affecting business in relation to COVID-19 in Bulgaria

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SECTOR	SUBJECT	LEGAL BASIS
<b>TODAY'S UPDATES</b>		
	There are no new measures or changes adopted as of today, 30 December 2022.	

No.	SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION	LEGAL BASIS
<b>GENERAL MEASURES</b>			
1.	<b>General social distancing measures<sup>1</sup></b>	According to amendments to the Health Act, after the termination of the emergency epidemic situation in Bulgaria at the end of March 2022, the Minister of Health is entitled to introduce new anti-epidemic measures depending on the development of the health situation in the country. However, such measures cannot include prohibition for entry into the country, restriction of the movement in the country, as well as restrictions for the operation of public facilities and/or other facilities or services provided to citizens.  <b>As of 17 November 2022, no general social distancing measures apply.</b>	Health Act, as amended <i>(Effective as of 26 April 2022)</i>
2.	<b>Entry restrictions for arriving passengers</b>	As of 01 May 2022, no entry restrictions apply to passengers arriving in the Republic of Bulgaria.	Order No. ПД-01-189 dated 28 April 2022 issued by the Minister of Health <i>(Effective as of 01 May 2022)</i>
3.	<b>Legislative moratorium on payments</b>	From 13 March to 13 July 2020, the effects of default on payments based on financial agreements, e.g., loans, leases, etc. of private persons and entities were suspended. <sup>2</sup> The payments affected by the suspension can be owed to financial institutions (banks, lease companies, etc.) or to third parties, in case of assignment of the receivable.	State of Emergency Act, as amended <i>(Effective 24 March 2020,</i>

<sup>1</sup> Anti-epidemic measures can be introduced by the regional health authorities for individual regions of the country. Mayors of municipalities can also adopt further social distancing measures.

<sup>2</sup> For the period from 13 March 2020 until 8 April 2020, the general suspension of the effects of default on payments applies to all delayed payments of private persons and entities regardless of the type of the obligations, i.e., it is not necessary for them to be based on financial agreements for this period.

No.	SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION	LEGAL BASIS
		Suspension of the effects of default on payments includes the accrual of interest and penalties for delay, acceleration, and the right to rescind a contract.	<i>retroactively from 13 March 2020</i> <i>Amendment effective 9 April 2020</i> <i>Amendment effective 14 May 2020)</i>
4.	<b>Non-legislative (voluntary) moratorium on payment of financial loans</b>	<p>In compliance with the <a href="#">Guidelines on legislative and non-legislative moratoria on loan repayments applied in the light of the COVID-19 crisis</a> of the European Banking Authority (“EBA”), the BNB approved local directions on terms and procedures of moratorium on payment of financial loans provided by banks and their subsidiaries as proposed by the Association of Banks in Bulgaria. The directions include various mechanisms of reliefs for the borrowers, e.g., temporarily postponement of capital and/or interest payments on the loan without further amending the terms and conditions. Eligibility criteria in respect of the borrowers apply.</p> <p><b>The term for applications expired on 23 March 2021 and was not further extended.</b></p>	<p>Decision dated 10 April 2020 adopted by the Bulgarian National Bank (“BNB”), as amended <i>(Effective 10 April 2020 until the end of 2020)</i></p> <p>Decision dated 11 December 2020 adopted by the BNB <i>(Effective 11 December 2020 until the end of 2021)</i></p>

No.	SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION	LEGAL BASIS
<b>RETAIL, SERVICES, TRAVEL, LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY</b>			
5.	<b>VAT reduction due for various services</b>	<p>VAT is reduced to 9% from 1 July 2020 to 31 December 2022 for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Printed or E-books;</li> <li>– Restaurant or catering services, including for food delivery;</li> <li>– Food and hygiene materials for babies and toddlers;</li> <li>– Tour operators, tourism agents, transport related to tourism services;</li> <li>– Sports activities, including providers of fitness services.</li> </ul> <p>Vat due for COVID-19 vaccines and the services related to it and for other diagnostic medical devices is reduced to 0% until 31 December 2022.</p>	<p>Act to Amend and Supplement the VAT Act <i>(Effective 1 January 2022)</i></p>
6.	<b>Refund offered by the companies providing tourism services for cancelled travel</b>	<p>Companies providing tourism services (tour operators) can offer a voucher instead of refunding the amount paid for travel, which is cancelled until 31 December 2020. If the traveler does not accept the voucher, the tour operator must refund the amount within 12 months as of the date of cancelation of the travel.</p>	<p>State of Emergency Act, as amended <i>(Effective 9 April 2020</i> <i>Amendment effective 14 May 2020,</i> <i>Amendment effective 11 August 2020)</i></p>

No.	SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION	LEGAL BASIS
<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>			
7.	<b>Remote and home-based work</b>	<p>For the period of the state of emergency and the emergency epidemic situation (<b>i.e., until 31 March 2022</b>), employers were allowed (depending on the nature of the work and possibility for remote work or work from home) to assign to employees, <b><u>without their consent</u></b>, remote work or work from home.</p> <p>Any employee who is in close contact with a person having a laboratory-confirmed Covid-19, shall switch to remote work or work from home, if possible, by declaring such circumstances to the employer.</p>	<p>State of Emergency Act, as amended  <i>(Effective 24 March 2020, retroactively from 13 March 2020,</i>  <i>Amendment effective 14 May 2020,</i>  <i>Amendment effective 21 November 2020)</i>                      Labor Code, as amended</p>
8.	<b>Unilateral right of employer to grant the use of the annual paid leave</b>	<p>For the period of the state of emergency or the emergency epidemic situation (<b>i.e., until 31 March 2022</b>) the employer was allowed to order its employees (including employees having less than 8 months of employment), without their consent, to use their annual paid leave, if the work of (i) the enterprise, (ii) part of the enterprise or (iii) certain employees has been suspended based on an order of the employer or an order of the authorities.</p> <p>Also, for the period of the state of emergency or the emergency epidemic situation (<b>i.e., until 31 March 2022</b>), employers were obliged to grant the annual paid or unpaid leave to certain categories of employees, e.g., pregnant employees, employees in advanced stage of in vitro treatment, etc. All categories of employees are listed in Article 173a of the Labor Code.</p>	<p>Labor Code, as amended</p>

No.	SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION	LEGAL BASIS
9.	<b>Obligation for the employers to pay PCR tests of the employees by business trips abroad</b>	According to Decision of the Council of Ministers dated 3 February 2021, the Ordinance on Business Trips and Specializations Abroad has been amended and employers will be obliged to pay for PCR tests of their employees, if the entry into the respective country requires such test.	Decision of the Council of Ministers dated 3 February 2021 to Amend and Supplement the Ordinance on Business Trips and Specializations Abroad <i>(Effective 12 February 2021)</i>
10.	<b>Social-security and work length of service in 2021</b>	Also, within two months after the end of the emergency epidemic situation ( <b>i.e., 31 May 2022</b> ), precautionary measures were not imposed, and enforcement actions were not carried out on compensations paid to employees based on an act of the Council of Ministers in relation to overcoming the COVID-19 crisis. Other enforcement actions were also restricted within two months after the end of the emergency epidemic situation.	State of Emergency Act, as amended <i>(Effective 17 February 2021)</i>

No.	SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION	LEGAL BASIS
<b>JUDICIAL, ADMINISTRATIVE AND ENFORCEMENT PROCEEDINGS</b>			
11.	<b>General suspension of procedural time limits and deadlines</b>	Procedural time limits within pending litigation, arbitration and enforcement procedures, which were suspended during the period of the state of emergency and were not exempted from the suspension, continued to run again from 21 May 2020.	State of Emergency Act, as amended <i>(Effective 24 March 2020, retroactively from 13 March 2020)</i> <i>Amendment effective 9 April 2020</i> <i>Amendment effective 14 May 2020)</i>
12.	<b>General suspension of limitation periods</b>	All limitation periods, whose expiry extinguishes or creates rights for private persons and entities, which were suspended during the period of the state of emergency, continued to run again from 21 May 2020.	State of Emergency Act, as amended <i>(Effective 24 March 2020, retroactively from 13 March 2020.</i> <i>Amendment effective 9 April 2020</i> <i>Amendment effective 14 May 2020))</i>
13.	<b>Extension of time periods, established by law, for private persons and entities</b>	All other time periods, established by law, which have expired during the period of the state of emergency, <b><u>which were not suspended</u></b> as per the above, and are related to the exercise of rights or the fulfillment of obligations by private persons and entities, were <b><u>extended until one month after the end of the state of emergency, i.e., until 13 June 2020.</u></b> Time limits for certain procedures, e.g., under the Public Procurement Act, the	State of Emergency Act, as amended <i>(Effective 24 March 2020, retroactively from 13 March 2020.</i> <i>Amendment effective 17 April</i>



No.	SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION	LEGAL BASIS
		Concessions Act, the Spatial Development Act, the Protection of Competition Act, etc., and under the related secondary legislation, did not fall within the scope of this general suspension.	2020)
14.	<b>Extension of the validity of expiring acts of the administration</b>	The validity of all acts of the administration, which are time-limited, and expiring during the state of emergency, <b><u>was extended until one month after the end of the state of emergency, i.e., until 13 June 2020.</u></b>	State of Emergency Act, as amended <i>(Effective 24 March 2020, retroactively from 13 March 2020.)</i>
15.	<b>Court hearings and other procedural actions</b>	<p>During the emergency epidemic situation, the Chief Administrative Officials of the courts were entitled to postpone scheduled court hearings. The Chief Administrative Officials were also able to suspend the public court hearings for a certain period of time once, but for a period no longer than 14 days, and postpone the scheduled court hearings during such period. Exceptions applied for some court hearings.</p> <p>During the emergency epidemic situation, the court was able to postpone the court hearing if a party to the proceeding or its representative was ill, quarantined, etc. Respective evidence had to be provided before the court within 7 days after the reasons for the postponement no longer apply.</p> <p>Court hearings can be held by video conference. <i>(Based on the latest Amendments and Supplements to the Civil Procedure Code, Criminal Procedure Code and Administrative Procedure Code published in the State Gazette on 17 November 2020, court hearings and various procedural actions can be held by video conference. Specific rules apply for them).</i></p> <p>Court papers can be served and submitted electronically <i>(Based on the latest Amendments and Supplements to the Civil Procedure Code and Criminal Procedure Code published in the State Gazette on 29 December 2020).</i></p>	<p>State of Emergency Act, as amended <i>(Effective 24 March 2020, Amendment effective 14 May 2020, Amendment effective 21 November 2020)</i></p> <p>Decision dated 12 May 2020 adopted by the Supreme Judicial Council</p> <p>Rules and Measures on the Work of Courts in the Conditions of Pandemic</p>

No.	SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION	LEGAL BASIS
16.	<b>Suspension of certain enforcement actions and notarial proceedings</b>	<p>Public enforcement sales and repossessions against natural persons were suspended until 13 July 2020. After that the relevant procedures were initiated anew.</p> <p>This general suspension of some enforcement actions applied until 13 July 2020.</p> <p>Notary certifications can be made without limitation, subject to the general measures in item 1 above.</p>	<p>State of Emergency Act, as amended</p> <p><i>(Effective 24 March 2020</i> <i>Amendment effective 14 May 2020)</i></p>
17.	<b>Holding of meetings via remote access or suspension of the meetings of some authorities</b>	<p>The State of Emergency Act permitted public authorities, state agencies, commissions, etc. (which are not legal entities), to hold their meetings digitally via remote access and to adopt their decisions <i>in absentia</i> during the state of emergency, respectively the emergency epidemic situation, and two months after its end (<b>i.e., 31 May 2022</b>).</p> <p>The State of Emergency Act also permitted public meetings, including the meetings of the Commission for Protection of Competition and the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, to be held digitally via remote access during the state of emergency, respectively the emergency epidemic situation, and two months after its end (<b>i.e., 31 May 2022</b>).</p>	<p>State of Emergency Act, as amended</p> <p><i>(Effective 9 April 2020,</i> <i>Amendment effective 14 May 2020, Amendment effective 21 November 2020)</i></p> <p>Order No. ПД-01-968 dated 26 November 2021 issued by the Minister of Health</p> <p><i>(Effective 1 December 2021 until 31 March 2022)</i></p>

No.	SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION	LEGAL BASIS
<b>PUBLIC PROCUREMENTS<sup>3</sup> AND STATE GRANTS</b>			
18.	<b>Public procurement exemption</b>	Purchasing of medical products and personal protection equipment necessary to support health measures in case of a state of emergency or emergency epidemic situation and three months after its end ( <b>i.e., 30 June 2022</b> ) was permitted without following a public procurement procedure.	State of Emergency Act, as amended <i>(Effective 24 March 2020, retroactively from 13 March 2020,</i> <i>Amendment effective 14 May 2020,</i> <i>Amendment effective 18 July 2020)</i>
19.	<b>Public procurement exemption</b>	The following acquisitions were exempted from public procurement rules in case of a state of emergency or emergency epidemic situation and three months after its end ( <b>i.e., 30 June 2022</b> ):  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Purchasing of sanitary materials, disinfectants, medical devices and personal protection equipment, needed for anti-epidemic measures;</li> <li>2. Purchasing of medical devices, medical and laboratory equipment, needed for the diagnostics and treatment of infected patients, the consumables for them, as well as associated implementation activities;</li> <li>3. Utilization of pesticides and hospital waste under Ordinance No. 1 on the requirements for collection and treatment of waste on the territory of the healthcare establishments (<i>SG, Issue 13 of 2015, as amended</i>).</li> </ol>	State of Emergency Act, as amended <i>(Effective 24 March 2020, retroactively from 13 March 2020,</i> <i>Amendment effective 14 May 2020,</i> <i>Amendment effective 18 July 2020)</i>

<sup>3</sup> See also [Joint Procurement Agreement to Procure Medical Countermeasures](#).

No.	SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION	LEGAL BASIS
		4. Transport services related to medical devices, medical materials, etc. needed for anti-epidemic measures and for diagnostics and treatment of infected patients. <i>(Effective 14 May 2020)</i>	
20.	<b>Exemption from the rules concerning procurement of medical devices</b>	Certain rules, applicable to the procurement of medical devices by the Ministry of Health, and healthcare establishments of state and municipal ownership, did not apply to purchases of medical devices needed for anti-epidemic measures, for treatment and diagnostics of infected patients during the state of emergency, the emergency epidemic situation and three months after its end <b>(i.e., 30 June 2022)</b> .	State of Emergency Act, as amended <i>(Effective 24 March 2020, retroactively from 13 March 2020,</i> <i>Amendment effective 18 July 2020)</i>
21.	<b>Direct award of grants by the state</b>	Grants can be awarded by the state, without prior invitation for collecting offers, under reduced time periods, with a simplified process for approval, until the end of the state of emergency, respectively the end of the emergency epidemic situation, and 9 months afterwards <b>(i.e., 31 December 2022)</b> .	State of Emergency Act, as amended Council of Ministers Decree No. 67 dated 13 April 2020 <i>(Effective 24 March 2020, retroactively from 13 March 2020)</i>

No.	SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION	LEGAL BASIS
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>			
22.	<b>National plan for vaccination against COVID-19 vaccines</b>	<p>On 04 December 2020 the Council of Ministers adopted a National plan for vaccination against COVID-19 which generally sets out the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The target population;</li> <li>• Vaccination delivery strategy;</li> <li>• Vaccine safety monitoring;</li> <li>• Immunization monitoring systems, etc.</li> </ul> <p>The National plan for vaccination was subsequently amended by the authorities.</p>	Decision dated 04 December 2020 adopted by the Council of Ministers
23.	<b>National operational plan for handling the Covid-19 pandemic</b>	<p>On 13 January 2022 the Council of Ministers adopted the National Operational Plan for handling the Covid-19 pandemic which provides the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The country will be divided into 6 clusters as districts. The map will be presented every day, it will show the situation and a forecast for the next 5 days.</li> <li>• Depending on the intensive care beds occupied in each cluster, the plan defines four stages.</li> <li>• According to the stage the cluster is in, a phased introduction of various anti-epidemic measures is envisaged.</li> </ul>	