

Impact of COVID-19 on Justice from Lawyer Viewpoint – CCBE Actions



Thomas Wahl

News

The Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) started several actions to alert the public to the situation of lawyers following confinement measures during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The association published an [overview of measures](#) taken in some European countries addressing the impact of the Coronavirus crisis on justice issues. The overview includes the responses to a CCBE survey regarding experiences and best practices between bars. The bars describe the effects of the crisis on justice in the various European countries, including non-EU countries, e.g., Norway and Switzerland.

The overview focuses on the following:

- Court proceedings;
- Access to a lawyer (in prison and during preliminary proceedings);
- Individual measures taken by the bars or law firms;
- Potential economic and fiscal measures or incentives to mitigate the crisis (e.g., tax reductions).

Protection of the health of lawyers and clients as well as the guarantee of fundamental rights, despite obligations to keep distance, play an important role in the responses. The overview reveals that approaches by the countries differ in many points. In Germany, for instance, it is up to the individual court to decide whether to hold hearings and take precautionary/safety measures or not. In contrast, the majority of judicial proceedings has been postponed in Greece. In Spain, procedures were suspended after the state of alarm had been established, but it provides for a number of exceptions, given the importance and essential nature of certain processes and actions. However, nearly all states are in agreement on the reduction of taxes and allow court proceedings by means of video conferences.

[CCBE newsletter issue #87](#) includes a special focus on the impact of COVID-19 on justice. It informs readers of the CCBE's initiatives to alert EU institutions to the implications of the COVID-19 crisis on justice and to request support for the justice sector. A [special web page](#) is devoted to the topic; it gathers information on the impact of the pandemic on justice at the international, European, and national levels. In May 2020, the CCBE also created a new Task Force ("Access to Justice – Current challenges, modern solutions") to discuss and anticipate the implications of the COVID-19 crisis on the legal profession and the justice sector in general.

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