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President of Cluj Bar Association

Dear Colleague,

I am very grateful that you decided to share your experience regarding how the Sars-Cov-2 virus pandemic affects the professional activity of lawyers in Romania. Indeed, the negative social and economic consequences of the pandemic are quite dire. Poland is no exception, and we are also facing an economic crisis that has a significant impact on the professional activity of lawyers, including attorneys-at-law. We are currently in a paradoxical situation where the society, and entrepreneurs in particular, require legal assistance on a scale much larger than before, so that they may protect their businesses from the effects of the epidemic, and react to them promptly, and at the same time, those same entrepreneurs often cannot bear the costs of such necessary legal assistance. This naturally causes frustration on both sides, and raises the need to search for solutions.

It goes without saying that during a crisis of this magnitude, first and foremost the State's systemic help becomes crucial and necessary. Following from that, several solutions were introduced in Polish law, which, in their concept, are meant to help entrepreneurs - and lawyers that conduct their own economic activity notwithstanding - survive these most difficult times. The scope and kind of this help is evaluated in different ways. Most of the beneficiaries seem to consider this help to be insufficient, pointing out that it does not remove the dangers stemming from the crisis to an acceptable degree. Below you will find examples of some of the solutions that were introduced by the State:

- the so called "downtime benefit", for economic downtime - available to entrepreneurs whose income is at least 15% lower than their income from the preceding month;

- a loan for micro-entrepreneurs to cover the running costs of conducting economic activity - which, on the entrepreneur's request, may be written off, upon the condition that the micro-entrepreneur does not reduce employment during a period of 3 months since the loan was given;
- the possibility to take advantage of partial funding of economic activity costs in case of a decline in sales as a result of the coronavirus pandemic;
- either partial or full (depending on the size of the enterprise) exemption from the ZUS (social security system) premiums;
- funding for employee wages in connection with a decline in sales as a result of the epidemic, under specific conditions - and many more.

The Cracow Bar Association of Attorneys-at-Law, which brings together over four thousand attorneys-at-law, also endeavors to provide assistance to its members, within its capabilities. Said assistance is mainly of a substantive character: we organize online courses, the profile of which is tailor fit to the needs resulting from the current legal and economic situation, as well as those particular needs that are brought up by the members of the Association; we have set up a system of mutual support for those attorneys-at-law that require it; we continuously provide information regarding the steps that are being taken by State institutions in connection with the pandemic; we are also planning a purchase of electronic tools that will assist attorneys-at-law in working remotely. Financial assistance for attorneys-at-law, from the budget of our professional self-government, out of necessity has to be limited, and is only of a social character; nevertheless, we strive to provide such assistance in the most efficient manner possible to those that are in need of it.

As a professional self-government, being aware of the huge significance that the condition of the economy on one part, and the legal awareness of "normal" citizens and them being somewhat used to needing legal services on the other, have for the professional activity of lawyers, we also strive to undertake activities such as organizing or supporting various pro bono legal assistance programs. We trust that those that benefit from such assistance will not only be better equipped to fight the consequences of the epidemic, but as a result will also become not just law firms beneficiaries, but their clients. Having that in mind, we have organized a program of shifts that are taken by attorneys-at-law to provide assistance for those that are suffering from the consequences of the epidemic, and we also cooperate with the

regional initiative: the Entrepreneur's Forum, as a part of the #wspieramylokalnybiznes program.

We all hope that the epidemic will decline as soon as possible, and that the limitations that are connected with it, as well as their consequences, which we are all struggling with, will be as insignificant as possible. Having said that, undoubtedly the current situation will influence the economy for a much longer period of time than the epidemic itself. All efforts that will allow to at least partially limit this influence - including the experience exchange initiated by yourself - are extremely valuable. I once again thank you for this initiative.

With the very best regards,

DZIEKAN
Rady GMRP w Krakowie
dr Marcin Śala-Szczyński
Urząd Główny

