



Medicinal Cannabis in Greece

The cannabis revolution, worldwide spread, has recently reached Greece, the latter introducing the Law **4523/2018** pertaining to the authorization of the cultivation, production and trade of medical cannabis in Greece. Nine months upon publication of said Law in the Governmental Gazette, Health Minister Andreas Xanthos, Deputy Economy Minister Stergios Pitsiorlas and Deputy Agricultural Development Minister Vassilis Kokkalis have proceeded to the announcement of the first two licenses for growing of medicinal cannabis granted to BIOMEKAN SA and BIOPROCANN SA while, according to estimations of the Greek Government, in the near future, twelve more companies having applied for a license, shall be authorized for the cultivation of medicinal cannabis in Greece. The growing investing interest, emanating mainly from Canada and Israel, is expected to amount approximately to 200 million Euros and has been welcomed by the Government which strives to create a more flexible and attractive entrepreneurial environment. In this context, the Ministry of Rural Development and Food has brought to public consultation a plan for the amendment of the Joint Ministerial Decision **51483/2018** regulating the terms and conditions for cultivation of Cannabis Sativa L, so as to enable the interested investors and producers to submit their

proposals for the amelioration of the legislative framework governing the cultivation of medicinal cannabis. As clarified by the Greek Minister of Health and the Minister of Rural Development and Food, the granted licenses refer solely to the growing and cultivation of medicinal cannabis whereas the licensing for the production of medicinal products for prescription, forecasted to be available in the Greek market within 1,5 years, shall follow at a later stage.

It is worth mentioning that, upon green-lighting of the cultivation and production of medical cannabis, public awareness and interest with regard to the impact and benefits of medicinal cannabis for patients' health has significantly augmented resulting to an increase of the demand by a great number of patients' groups and associations to expedite the availability for prescription of medicinal cannabis products. Nevertheless, despite the intentions of the competent authorities to include medicinal cannabis products in the country's electronic prescription system, it seems, according to allegations of governmental officials that said products might not be covered by state health insurance.

In light of the above, the introduction of a legislative framework enabling the lawful cultivation of medicinal cannabis is, in every respect, a positive step towards development. However, although bureaucracy in Greece has been proven in the past to constitute a major impediment for enterprises, we hope that the Government, taking into account the investing interest that has been expressed shortly upon the introduction of Law 4523/2018, shall endeavour to provide for a flexible and efficient implementation of the legislative framework, avoiding in particular redundant procedural delays and as such addressing the needs for business development and capital investment.

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