



REPORT ON CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SUPREME BAR COUNCIL OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

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In 2024, the Supreme Bar Council (SBC) of the Republic of Bulgaria undertook several significant initiatives and activities aimed at strengthening the legal profession and upholding the rule of law.

Advocacy for Judicial Integrity

On October 25, 2024, coinciding with European Lawyers Day, the Supreme Bar Council unanimously supported a national protest organized by the bar associations across Bulgaria. The protest opposed the ongoing procedures for electing the Prosecutor General and the President of the Supreme Administrative Court by the current Supreme Judicial Council, whose mandate had expired. Lawyers from various cities, including Sofia, Plovdiv, Burgas, Ruse, Stara Zagora, Pernik, Vidin, and Smolyan, participated in rallies advocating for the suspension of these election procedures until a newly constituted SJC could undertake them, ensuring legitimacy and public trust in the judiciary.

Development of a New Attorneys Act

The Supreme Bar Council initiated the development of a new concept for the Attorneys Act, aiming to modernize and improve the legislative framework governing the legal profession in Bulgaria. This initiative reflects the Council's commitment to adapting to contemporary legal challenges and enhancing the effectiveness of legal practice.

In this regard, an amended and supplemented version of the Ordinance on Remuneration for Attorneys' Work was adopted. The Council is taking this step after the decision of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) last year, after which the Ordinance on Minimum Attorneys' Fees is no longer mandatory for the court when awarding attorney's fees. This has led to a diverse practice in determining costs, which in some cases was



defined by attorneys as offensive. In order to have clear criteria on which not only the court for costs, but also the bar associations can rely when determining fees, the Council initiated amendments to the Attorneys' Act and the Civil Procedure Code (CPC). They proposed new rules for determining special representatives and their fees and for objections to excessive attorney's fees. They were adopted by the previous National Assembly, but President Rumen Radev vetoed some of the texts in view of the procedure for appointing a special representative and the powers of the bar councils in this regard.

The scope of the new Ordinance is limited to cases in which there is no contract between a lawyer and a client, regardless of whether the remuneration will be determined by the Bar Council or by the court. At the same time, without being explicitly provided for, the criteria in the Ordinance allow its application as a guideline for regulating the relationship between a lawyer and a client.

Commitment to Continuing Legal Education and Professional Qualification

The Supreme Bar Council emphasized the importance of continuing legal education by organizing various seminars and training sessions throughout the year (more than 300 at all). These programs were designed to keep legal practitioners abreast of the latest developments in national and international law, thereby enhancing their professional competence.

In this regard, we should emphasize the excellent cooperation between the Bulgarian Bar, through its Attorneys' Training Center, and its international partners, including the HELP Program of the Council of Europe, the European Lawyers Foundation (ELF), and the "Friends of ERA" Association. During the reporting period, for the first time, the Attorneys' Training Center had access to European funding and participated as a partner in a European project as part of the ELF consortium.

Engagement with International Legal Organizations

The Supreme Bar Council continued its active participation in international legal forums and maintained collaborative relationships with global legal organizations. This engagement facilitates the exchange of best practices and promotes the integration of Bulgaria's



legal community into the broader international context. The successful interaction and membership of the Bulgarian Bar in international Bar organizations, such as CCBE, UIA, IBA, FBE, etc., continues.

Through these initiatives and activities in 2024, the Supreme Bar Council demonstrated its dedication to upholding the principles of justice, enhancing the legal framework, and supporting the professional development of attorneys in Bulgaria.

On May 10, 2024, the Supreme Bar Council hosted an international roundtable on legal aid, where the Bulgarian experience was shared from the perspective of the legal profession—highlighting best practices and challenges related to the regulation and remuneration of legal aid, the qualification of lawyers, and other relevant issues. The event was attended by representatives of the Romanian and Greek Bars.

In the last year, the Presidential Council of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) elected Mrs. Eli Hristova, a member of the Supreme Bar Council, as Vice-Chair of the Deontology Committee. For the first time in the 60-year history of the CCBE, a Bulgarian lawyer has been entrusted with such a responsible position.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the fruitful efforts made during the current mandate of the Supreme Bar Council, of which I was a President, which ends this year.

During the mandate, the international prestige and authority of the Bulgarian Bar was raised to the necessary level, and the protection of the professional interests and rights of Bulgarian lawyers was a priority in my activities as a President. I will continue to make efforts to establish the Bulgarian Bar as an authoritative and independent institution, which will be a significant partner and participant in international events and processes.

7th of February 2025

Sofia, Bulgaria