

PRESS RELEASE

Due to the spread of COVID-19, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation implements measures ensuring access to justice, citizens' health and the stable work of the courts in the new circumstances.

On 18 March and 8 April of this year, joint rulings of the Presidiums of the Russian Supreme Court and of the Russian Council of Judges were adopted, containing recommendations regarding the work of the courts.

Personal reception of citizens in the courts has been halted, it is recommended to submit procedural documents through the postal service and in electronic form (the timely reception, processing and registration of incoming documents is ensured); to consider the cases of urgent nature, cases considered in the manner of court order proceedings and simplified proceedings, cases in which all the participants have filed motions for consideration of the case in their absence, unless their participation during the consideration of the case is obligatory.

While observing these recommendations, from 18 March to 20 April of this year the courts have considered over 2 million cases and materials.

Electronic resources of the judiciary are seeing greater demand: the courts have received 225 200 documents in electronic form during the period from 18 March to 20 April 2020, which is 1.5 times higher (or 77 300 more documents) than during the same period last year (147 900 documents were submitted to the courts in electronic form from 18 March to 20 April 2019).

Moreover, 8 000 court sessions were held from 18 March to 20 April of this year with the use of videoconferencing. Citizens have accessed the Internet-based State Automated System "Justice" over 286 million times. Starting from 21 April 2020, certain categories of cases are considered by the Russian Supreme Court with the use of a secure web conferencing system.

In his address of 2 April to the general jurisdiction courts of cassation and appeal, the Military Court of Cassation and the Appellate Military Court, regional courts, circuit, fleet military courts, and commercial courts, the Chief Justice of the Russian Supreme Court Vyacheslav Lebedev asked the courts to forward issues pertaining to application of legislative amendments

and measures aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19 to the Supreme Court for the purposes of uniform application of legislation.

In this regard, on 21 April 2020 the Presidium of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation adopted a Review of Certain Issues of Judicial Practice pertaining to the Application of Legislation and Measures Aimed at Preventing the Spread of the Novel Coronavirus Infection (COVID-19) in Russia (No. 1), containing answers to 26 questions regarding the application of procedural law, civil and criminal legislation, legislation on administrative offences and on bankruptcy.

In particular, this Review clarifies the manner of calculation and restoration of procedural terms and statutes of limitations, issues of performance of obligations, recognising the epidemiological situation and the restrictive measures as insurmountable circumstances (*force majeure*), the grounds on which obligations can be changed or terminated, the application of new elements of crimes and administrative offences, other issues.

The Review has been published on the website of the Russian Supreme Court and forwarded to the lower courts.

Work is currently underway to elaborate clarifications regarding other questions received from the courts – they will be presented for consideration of the Supreme Court Presidium in the near future.

Further clarifications regarding legislation and recommendations on the work of the courts will be adopted by the Russian Supreme Court with regard to the sanitary and epidemiological situation and the measures implemented in the Russian Federation to prevent the spread of COVID-19.