

Press Release of the Hellenic Bank Association

ACT OF LEGISLATIVE CONTENT:

"Emergency regulations regarding restrictions on cash withdrawals and capital transfers" (GOVERNMENT GAZETTE A 84/18.7.2015), as amended

Q & A

28 September 2018

1. Can I withdraw cash?

As of 1 October 2018 cash withdrawals from a Branch or an ATM, from banks in Greece, including withdrawals using credit and prepaid cards issued by credit institutions operating in Greece, are permitted with no limit on the amount withdrawn.

2. Can I withdraw cash in foreign currency from a branch?

YES, with no limit on the amount, as of 1 October 2018.

3. Can I use my *debit, credit and prepaid card* for cash withdrawals abroad?

YES, as of 1 October 2018 cash withdrawals abroad using debit, credit and prepaid cards issued by banks operating in Greece, are permitted up to the amount of €5,000 or its equivalent in foreign currency per calendar month per depositor (Customer ID), per bank.

4. Can I deposit cheques?

YES, the deposit of bank and personal cheques is allowed, but only when the proceeds are credited to a bank account. As of 1 October 2018 it is allowed to redeem cheques in cash.

5. Can I use my *debit, credit and/or prepaid card* for purchases in Greece?

YES. Credit, debit and prepaid cards can be used normally for purchases of goods and services in Greece, up to the limit specified in your agreement with the bank, provided that the businesses where goods or services are purchased clear the card transactions via an account held with a bank that operates in Greece.

However, if businesses operating in Greece have installed POS terminals provided by banks outside Greece, and the clearing of the card transactions is carried out via an account held with a bank outside Greece, it is forbidden for the credit, debit and prepaid cards issued by banks and e-money institutions operating in Greece to be used, unless the Banking Transaction Approval Committee grants special permission to this effect.

6. Can I use my *credit, debit and/or prepaid card* for purchases abroad or on the internet?

YES, if you are abroad you can use your cards for purchases of goods and services:

- up to the amount specified in your agreement with the bank, and
- subject to the limit authorized for each bank or e-money institution by the Banking Transaction Approval Committee.

For online purchases you can use your cards without restriction, up to the amount specified in your agreement with the bank, provided that the relevant online stores clear the card transactions via an account held with a bank that operates in Greece.

If the online stores clear the card transactions via an account held with a bank outside Greece, you can use your cards:

- up to the amount specified in your agreement with the bank, and
- subject to the limit authorized for each bank by the Banking Transaction Approval Committee.

However, the following eight (8) general categories of internet transactions are not permitted if the online stores clear the card transactions via an account held with a bank outside Greece:

1. Fund transfers abroad.
2. Purchase of works of art and auctions.
3. Transactions with betting companies and lucky games.
4. Purchases at jewellery stores.
5. General codes which include mainly transactions related to pornographic material.
6. Personal services (escorts and dating).
7. Payments to charity organizations.
8. Purchases of catering/dining services.

7. Can I open a new account or add a beneficiary to one of my existing deposit accounts?

YES, it is allowed to open an account and add a co-beneficiary to an existing account with a credit institution, irrespective of whether you create a new Customer ID or not.

8. Can I repay my loan early?

YES, early, partial or full repayment of a loan with a credit institution is allowed.

9. Can I ask for early redemption of my time deposit?

YES, early, partial or complete, redemption, of time deposits is allowed.

10. I own a business and I wish to start carrying out transactions using *credit, debit and prepaid cards*. Can this be done?

YES, provided that you sign an agreement with a bank, payment institution and/or e-money institution operating in Greece. In this case, you are allowed to open a new account for the clearing of card transactions on the basis of this new agreement.

Conversely, you cannot enter into agreements for accepting card payments if the clearing of such transactions is done by crediting an account you hold with a bank, payment institution and/or e-money institution outside Greece.

11. My business carries out transactions using *credit, debit and prepaid cards*. When will my account be credited?

The clearing of transactions using payment cards, whether Greek or foreign, is carried out by crediting your firm's account pursuant to the provisions of the relevant agreement you have signed.

12. Can my business, where a POS is installed, refuse to conduct transactions using cards?

NO, because pursuant to the Act of Legislative Content, as amended, anyone who refuses payment by credit, debit and prepaid cards is subject to heavy legal penalties under:

- Articles 288 par. 1 and 452 of the Penal Code,
- Article 13a, Law 2251/1994 (A 191),
- Article 18 a, Law 146/1914 (A 21), and
- Article 19, Law 4177/2013 (A 173), as applicable.

13. Can credit, debit and/or prepaid cards of foreign banks be used normally?

Credit, debit and/or prepaid cards of foreign banks that have been issued abroad can be used both for purchases of goods and services and for cash withdrawals without restrictions, within the limits specified in your agreement with the issuing bank.

14. Can I transfer funds from abroad?

YES. The transfer of funds from accounts held with a foreign bank to an account held with a bank operating in Greece is allowed.

15. Is it allowed to take cash out of the country?

You can take out a maximum of €10,000 or its equivalent in foreign currency per person per journey abroad. People who are foreign residents are exempted from the €10,000 restriction. In addition, persons authorized by shipping companies to cover the vessel's needs (cash-to-master) are exempted up to the maximum daily amount of €50,000, subject to the presentation of the relevant documentation to the competent customs authority. Such documentation has been specified by a decision of the Banking Transaction Approval Committee.

16. Can I transfer funds out of the country?

NO, unless included in the exceptions processed on a daily basis by (a) Special Subcommittees of banks, pursuant to Decision 26/15.11.2017 (Govt. Gazette B 4050), and (b) the Banking Transaction Approval Committee, pursuant to the Act of Legislative Content, as amended.

In addition, the following transactions are permitted without prior approval from the Special Subcommittees of banks or the Banking Transaction Approval Committee:

- the acceptance and execution of orders to transfer funds abroad by banks up to the amount of €4,000 per Customer ID and per calendar 2-month period as of 1st July 2018 onwards, up to the monthly limit in euro for all the banks operating in Greece and accepting deposits, which the Banking Transaction Approval Committee has set and allocated per bank.

- transactions by legal entities or professional undertakings with parties outside Greece within the context of their business activities that do not exceed euro one hundred thousand (100,000) each, per day, per client, following the submission of relevant invoices and other documentation, which must be accompanied by a solemn declaration by which the said entities shall declare that the said submitted documents are genuine and have not been submitted to another bank. Said transactions shall be carried out directly through the branch networks of banks, by debiting the account of the counterparty and within the weekly limit set by the Banking Transaction Approval Committee for each bank,
- transactions carried out by individuals, deemed necessary for serious health purposes or exceptional social reasons which require the performance of payments to foreign countries or cash withdrawals; in such cases, the said individuals must submit to the bank the necessary documentation to evidence concurrence of the relevant conditions, while there is a monthly limit of euro two thousand (2,000) per individual (whether in a single or multiple transactions) for banks as a whole operating in Greece. *The said requests must be accompanied by a solemn declaration by which the said individuals shall state that the aforesaid submitted documents are genuine and have not been submitted to another bank.*

The said permitted transactions shall be carried out directly through the branch networks of banks.

17. What is the situation regarding payments for trading purposes overseas (paying for imports)?

For further details regarding the procedure, applicable as of 27 November 2017, for the submission and approval of requests for the transfer of funds abroad by firms and professional undertakings within the context of their business activities, see in detail: **Decision No 26/15.11.2017 (Gov. Gazette B 4050) of the Banking Transaction Approval Committee.**

18. How can I pay hospitalization and medical expenses?

Payment of hospitalization and medical expenses can be effected without the approval of the Banking Transaction Approval Committee under the following conditions:

- the required supporting documents are presented to the bank performing the transaction, and
- the respective amount of money covering the hospitalization and medical expenses is transferred into a bank account held by the medical institution and not the beneficiary himself.

In addition, it is possible to withdraw a maximum lump-sum of €2,000 or its equivalent in foreign currency and transfer the amount abroad for an accompanying person of someone who is going abroad for hospitalization, on condition that documentation is supplied evidencing the need to go abroad for the said purpose.

19. How can I pay the tuition fees of an educational institution abroad?

The payment of tuition fees can be effected without the approval of the Banking Transaction Approval Committee under the following conditions:

- the required supporting documents are presented to the bank performing the transaction, and
- the respective amount is transferred to a bank account held by the educational institution and not the beneficiary himself.

Furthermore, the transfer of the maximum amount of €5,000 or the same amount in foreign currency, per calendar quarter, in total, is allowed for accommodation and living expenses for students studying abroad or participating in student exchange programs. The payment shall be made to an account held overseas by the student.

However, in the event that the said amounts are credited directly to the account of the hall of residence or of the student's landlord (you should provide the rental contract or other relevant evidencing documents), you can transfer up to €8,000 or its equivalent in foreign currency per calendar quarter.

20. Can overseas funds credited to my bank account be transferred anew overseas?

YES, in their entirety. Their withdrawal in cash is also permitted. Documentation evidencing the inflow of funds from abroad and then their transfer again out of the country is the bank's responsibility and must be full and complete.

The transfer of funds abroad from an institution for the purchase of international financial instruments, as defined in article 5, law 3606/2007, as amended, is also allowed provided that:

- the beneficiary's bank account from which the transfer is carried out, or
- the customer account held with a credit institution by the investment services provider who transfers funds on behalf of the beneficiary,

was credited after the commencement of the bank holiday on 28 June 2015, with funds deriving from a wire transfer from abroad, including cases of credit transfer due to sale, acquisition or redemption of foreign financial instruments or collection of money distributions related to the said financial instruments. The aforesaid cases where transfer of funds outside Greece are allowed include money transfers for the purposes of acquiring UCITS units under Law 4099/2012.

21. Is it possible to pay in cash an attachment of a financial claim in the hands of the bank?

NO, in the case of an attachment of a financial claim in the hands of the bank, the Bank of Greece or the Deposit and Loans Fund as a third party, the amount can be paid either by issuing a cheque, or by crediting mandatorily an account of the attaching party held in the same or another bank.

22. Is payment on the basis of bank guarantees allowed?

YES.

23. Is the granting of new financing allowed?

YES, provided that the requirements posed by relevant legislation and the Bank's corporate credit policy are met.

24. Is the repayment / payment of open loans & credit lines allowed?

YES, this is allowed, in accordance with the terms and conditions of your relevant agreement with the bank.

25. Are overseas payroll payments to employees allowed?

NO, when the account which is charged for the payroll is held with a bank that operates in Greece and the accounts credited are held with banks abroad. Exempted from this restriction are staff on diplomatic missions, permanent representations or other services of the Greek State. Furthermore, staff on diplomatic missions, permanent representations or other services of the Greek State abroad who hold payroll accounts in a bank that has its registered office and operates in Greece are allowed to transfer the equivalent amount of their pay into an account they hold abroad, by supplying written evidence of their work status.

26. Are pension payments abroad allowed for pensioners?

YES, payments abroad -by social insurance organizations governed by Greek law - of pensions and welfare benefits of any kind are allowed, by crediting an account held with a bank domiciled and operating outside Greece, in the following cases: (a) if, prior to the start of the bank shutdown declared on 28 June 2015 (Act of Legislative Content A 65), the beneficiary of the pension or welfare benefit received his pension or benefit in this manner or if he can prove that he had submitted before this date an application to be granted such, and (b) if a pension is paid to the beneficiary for the first time as of 22 July 2016 and, in such case, he can prove that he has been an overseas resident for at least 2 years.

27. Can members of diplomatic missions and of consular posts withdraw cash?

YES, it is possible, upon presentation of the diplomatic corps ID card issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for members of diplomatic missions and of consular posts, and employees of international and European organizations specified in par. 16, Article 1 of Act of Legislative Content dated 18.7.2015 (who hold, for these purposes, the same status as members of diplomatic missions) to withdraw cash and to wire funds outside Greece, up to the amount of €5,000 per month, from one bank account per beneficiary.

28. Can I activate a dormant account?

YES, as of 14th November 2017 the suspension of the deadline under articles 7 and 8 of Law 4151/2013 (A' 103) no longer applies.

29. Can I transfer abroad earnings and dividends on my investments in Greece?

YES, provided that the funds for the investment in Greece were credited via a fund transfer from abroad to the investor's/beneficiary's account held with a bank operating in Greece.

Documentation evidencing the inflow of funds from abroad and the transfer of earnings and dividends out of the country shall be the credit institution's responsibility and must be full and complete.