

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001778/26
to the Commission
Konstantinos Arvanitis (The Left)
(30 April 2026)**

Subject: Exhausting on-call shifts in Greek National Health Service hospitals

The case of a specialist doctor being forced to carry out five consecutive 24-hour on-call shifts ⁽¹⁾ once again calls into question Greece's compliance with EU law as regards working conditions and rest periods for healthcare workers. It also highlights not only the enormous understaffing and the unfavourable and exhausting conditions prevailing in public health bodies, but also the risks that such practices pose to the protection of the health and safety of staff and patients.

In light of Directive 2003/88/EC, can the Commission say:

1. Does it consider that the practice of carrying out consecutive 24-hour on-call shifts without adequate rest is in line with EU law?
2. How does it assess the risk to the health and safety of both staff and patients resulting from such practices?
3. Does it intend to investigate a possible breach of the directive by Greece (see CJEU judgment C-180/2014)?

Submitted: 30.4.2026

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Mînzatu on behalf of the European Commission
(29 June 2026)**

To protect the safety and health of workers, the Working Time Directive 2003/88/EC ⁽¹⁾ lays down minimum requirements for the organisation of working time.

Every worker is entitled to a minimum daily rest period of 11 consecutive hours per 24-hour period ⁽²⁾. While derogations from this rule are allowed in the case of services relating to the reception, treatment and/or care provided by hospitals or similar establishments, they must be compensated for by an equivalent period of rest ⁽³⁾.

The Court of Justice of the European Union has clarified that this compensatory rest must follow on immediately from the working time which it is supposed to counteract ⁽⁴⁾.

On-call time, during which a worker is required to remain at the workplace or at another location determined by the employer, must be counted as working time ⁽⁵⁾.

Assuming that, in the case described, the performance of several consecutive 24-hour periods of on-call duty was not interrupted by 11 consecutive hours of daily rest (per 24-hour period), this situation was not in line with Directive 2003/88/EC, which applies to both private and public sector employers.

The responsibility for ensuring that the national legislation transposing EU directives is correctly and effectively applied lies primarily with the competent national authorities, including the courts, as only the competent national authorities can assess the state of facts in individual cases.

In its role as guardian of the Treaties, the Commission monitors compliance with the directive by all Member States, including Greece.

¹ <https://www.documentonews.gr/article/sygklonizei-i-paidiatros-pou-katerrefse-meta-5-synechomenes-efimeries-eimai-kourasmeni-den-boro-allo/>.

⁽¹⁾ Directive 2003/88/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 November 2003 concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time, OJ L 299, 18.11.2003, pp. 9-19, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2003/88/oj/eng>.

⁽²⁾ Article 3 of Directive 2003/88/EC.

⁽³⁾ Articles 17 and 18 of Directive 2003/88/EC.

⁽⁴⁾ Judgment of 9 September 2003, *Landeshauptstadt Kiel v Norbert Jaeger*, C-151/02, EU:C:2003:437, https://infocuria.curia.europa.eu/tabs/jurisprudence?sort=DOC_DATE-DESC&searchTerm=%22ECLI%3AEU%3AC%3A2003%3A437%22.

⁽⁵⁾ Judgment of 3 October 2000, *Simap Sindicato de Médicos de Asistencia Pública (Simap) v Conselleria de Sanidad y Consumo de la Generalidad Valenciana*, C-303/98, EU:C:2000:528; judgment of 9 September 2003, *Landeshauptstadt Kiel v Norbert Jaeger*, C-151/02, EU:C:2003:437; judgment of 1 December 2005, *Abdelkader Dellas and Others v Premier ministre and Ministre des Affaires sociales, du Travail et de la Solidarité*, C-14/04, EU:C:2005:728; judgment of 9 March 2021, *D. J. v Radiotelevizija Slovenija*, C-344/19, EU:C:2021:182; judgment of 9 March 2021, *RJ v Stadt Offenbach am Main*, C-580/19, EU:C:2021:183; judgment of 9 September 2021, *XR v Dopravní podnik hl. m. Prahy, a.s.*, C-107/19, EU:C:2021:722.

Should the Commission have evidence of breaches of Directive 2003/88/EC, it may take any action it deems necessary, pursuant to Article 258 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.
