

Over the last two weeks, we have received an increasing number of enquiries about the impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), commonly known as the coronavirus, and related measures adopted by the Slovak government on our clients' businesses. Some of the enquiries relate to the fact that our clients have been unable to timely enter into contracts, or perform other legal acts, for which Slovak law, or an agreement of the parties, requires the respective documents to be in writing and signed, in some cases with an authorized signature.

We have, therefore, decided to provide a short overview of the equivalent alternatives available under Slovak law that do not require a handwritten signature on a paper document. In particular, contracts or other legal acts can be taken by the involved parties in an electronic form and signed with an electronic signature.

The Civil Code says that the written form requirement is complied with when the required document is signed with a qualified signature (in Slovak: *zaručený elektronický podpis*) or with a qualified electronic seal (in Slovak: *zaručená elektronická pečať*). When a signature verified by the notary is required, it can be substituted with a qualified electronic signature or a qualified electronic seal with an electronic time stamp (in Slovak: *zaručená elektronická pečať opatrená časovou pečiatkou*).

For regular commercial contracts that do not have to be in writing, signing should not be an issue. However, if the parties require a contract in writing, a contract exchanged between the parties over email with a simple electronic signature (a signature block, which could even contain a scan of a signature) or a scan of a signed contract should be sufficient.

In order to obtain a qualified electronic signature, it is necessary to obtain an authorization certificate at the local police department. Moreover, it is necessary to obtain the latest ID card with an electronic chip. Foreign nationals can obtain an equivalent identification card at the foreign police department. Unfortunately, if you do not have one, you would have to visit the police department. Afterwards, it is possible to electrically sign documents with the qualified electronic signature using various licensed platforms (for example, Qsign) or the online portal zep.dising.sk, operated by Disig, a.s., which is currently free to use. In order to view the electronically signed document, it is necessary to have a signing application installed on one's PC.

Alternatively, depending on the format, most documents are viewable via the tools available on zep.dising.sk. However, you should review the privacy and security settings of the providers before any confidential documents are signed using their platforms.

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