



LABOR REFORM: GREECE PASSES A LAW ALLOWING 13-HOUR WORK DAYS UNDER LIMITED CIRCUMSTANCES

By Julián A. de Diego

Greece passed a law allowing 13-hour work days under exceptional circumstances, similar to Argentina's 8-hour workday and 48-hour workweek system. The decision follows company demands for more efficient processes and increased productivity in a world dominated by exponential technologies, robotics, automation, and Artificial Intelligence.

Employers are now able to schedule 13-hour workdays in exceptional situations, capped at 37 days per calendar year (three 13-hour workdays a month on average), within the limit of 48 hours per week.

Considering this cap, and the fact that the minimum rest period between workdays and the weekly rest period must be observed, the 13-hour workday is virtually limited to two days (26 hours) per week, so this leaves 22 hours to be worked on the remaining days.

The law also limits overtime during the calendar year (from January 1 to December 31) to a total of 150 hours.

In exchange for these 13-hour workdays workers shall receive a bonus of 40% of their hourly rate replacing other eventual surcharges and as an incentive and additional pay for their efforts and dedication to work 5 more hours each day.

Remember that Greece is ruled by a centre-right political party led by Kyriakos Mitsotakis. He is implementing labor measures aimed at job creation through policies to promote quality employment, special control mechanisms and adequate workers' registration in a context where emerging technology is changing the job market.

This 13-hour work schedule is mainly intended for **jobs in the continuous production of goods and services** where the outgoing shift overlaps with the incoming shift to ensure operational continuity. It can also be used in single shifts per day, e.g. from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., at times of peak demand from the industry and customers.

Countries such as **Australia, the US, South Korea, Japan, Canada and New Zealand** already use similar work schedules. And leading countries in emerging technology like Finland, Norway and Sweden also allow for 13-hour work days in certain cases. In Argentina, some industries have adopted the average working hours established in Section 198 LCT (Employment Contract Act) in the mining sector (Minera Lumbra, Barrick Gold), shopping mall retail chains such as Freddo, entertainment centers, seasonal businesses, year-round tourism, data centers, international information services, data transfer and shared services.

In Silicon Valley the new trend is to work "996", i.e. the number combination that refers to a work schedule — 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., six days a week, with a 12-hour rest period between workdays, for a total of 72 hours per week (The New York Times, 09/30/2025, article by Lora Kelley).

Margaret O'Mara, a historian at the University of Washington, and Carolyn Chen, a sociologist at the University of California, Berkeley, noted that a strain of "heroic masculine culture" in tech enforces the expectation that people should be working all the time. Extreme hours are becoming the norm in an attempt to compete fiercely with China's intense tech scene.

China's version of Silicon Valley's 996 is **Alibaba**, where workers work two shifts in 24 hours, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. and from 9 p.m. to 9 a.m. (Jack Ma, Chinese billionaire and founder of online shopping giant Alibaba said 996 is a huge blessing). While a Chinese high court actually barred employers from compelling workers to do this schedule in 2021, the practice persists in some industries in particular.

A clash between two worlds and two cultures

European countries have implemented 35-hour workweeks (Spain and France), which has led to mixed results, multiple employment, and inefficiency in reducing

unemployment. **In contrast, China and Silicon Valley** are experiencing a rise of the 996 work culture, especially in Internet and tech companies requiring workers to work **on-call and stand-by time, split shifts and intensive work schedules** (shorter hours without a dedicated lunch break) to meet market needs and demands.