

## Justice Ministry: Civil, criminal trials may be conducted via video conference during state of alert

**The Justice Ministry announced on Friday that with the coming into force, on May 2, of the Law on specific measures on justice during the COVID-19 pandemic, both civil and criminal trials can take place online.**

"Up until now, the use of online media was accepted only in the case of criminal proceeding hearings, with the consent of the person concerned," the Ministry said in a statement.

Specifically, Law No. 114/2021 on specific measures on justice during the COVID-19 pandemic comes with the following new elements:

\* In civil trials - when possible, and with the agreement of the parties, the courts may decide to hold hearings via video conference, without the physical participation of the parties in the courtroom.

\* In criminal trials, the persons deprived of liberty, other than those under house arrest, may be heard via video conference, without their consent being required. These provisions do not apply in the following cases: the hearing during the criminal investigation, the trial of cases with juvenile defendants, the judicial rehabilitation cases and court hearings declared non-public.

"The new provisions apply throughout the duration of the state of alert, in order to prevent and combat the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as for a 30-day period after the end of the state of alert. Apart from exceptional situations, we want online trial hearings to become a normality. To this effect, the Justice Ministry is currently working on several projects for turning courts digital, as undertaken in the Governing Program," the Ministry mentions.